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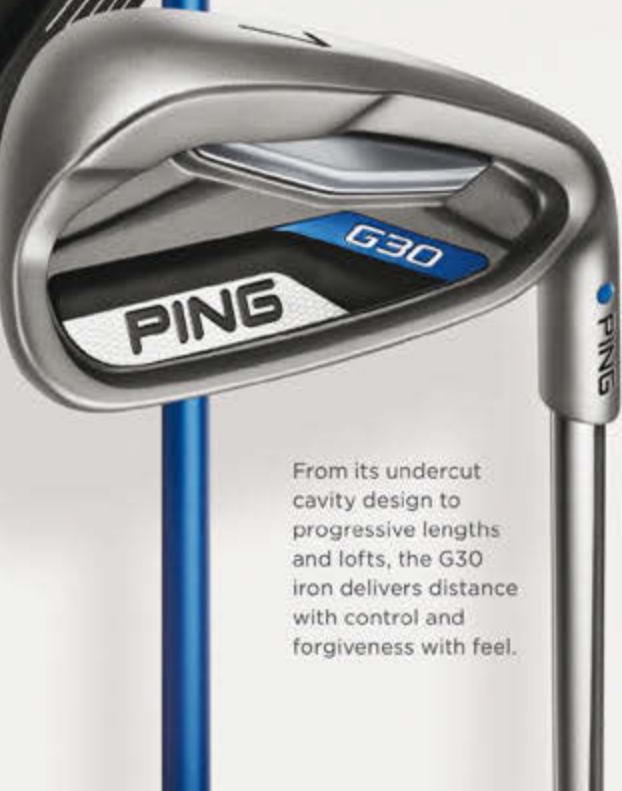
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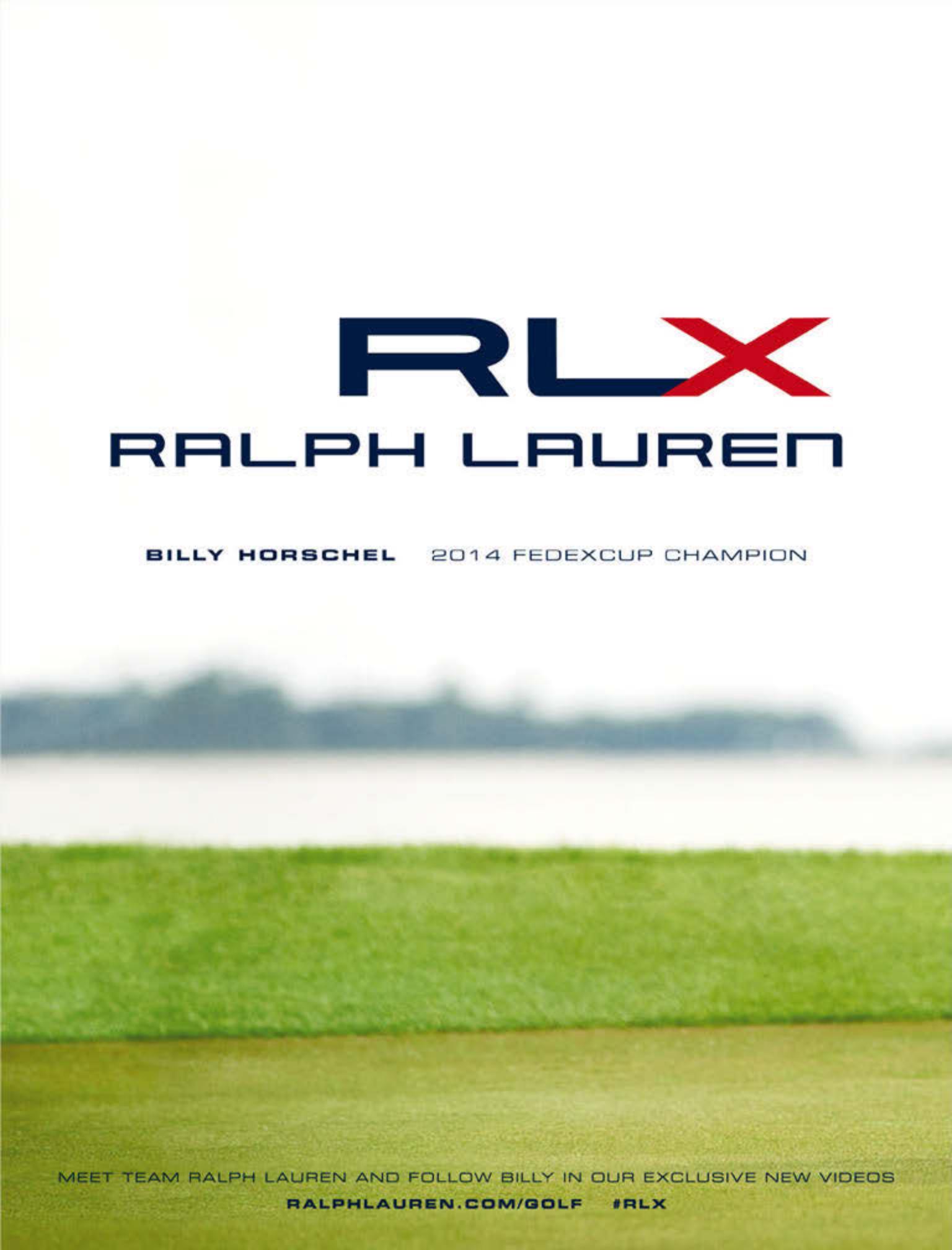


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Big Event
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THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP

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We all can learn something from LPGA Tour pros.

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A couple is shown in a romantic pose on a golf course in the rain. The man is holding the woman close, and they are both smiling. The background is a blurred landscape of trees and a golf course under a rainy sky.

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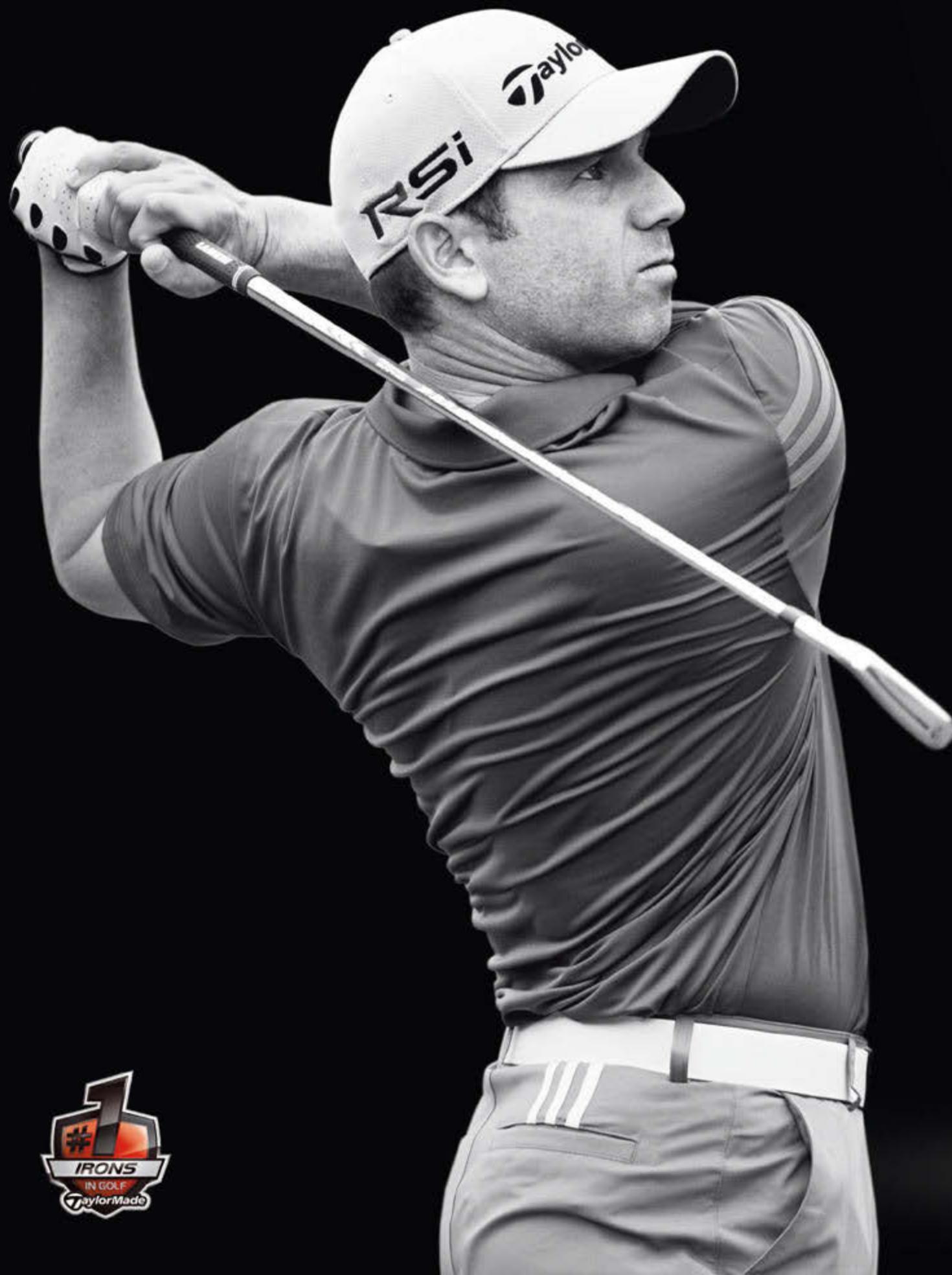
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SERGIO GARCIA

Editor's Letter

Mea Culpa, Ladies

JERRY TARDE
Chairman and Editor-in-Chief

F

FIRST, LET ME DISPENSE with the details of this historic *Golf Digest* cover, although I might point out that Rory McIlroy wasn't wearing a shirt on last month's cover, either. (No, not a trend—just a sign of the fitness of today's top players.)

I was not there. Lexi Thompson's mother, Judy, was. The editors had cleared the room during what were called the delicate moments. But Lexi wasn't the least bit self-conscious. When our Photographer-at-Large, Walter Iooss Jr., a veteran of 43 years of *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit issues, began working with Lexi, someone asked Judy if she was OK with the shoot. Mom's response was, "I am, but her middle brother won't be!" That's Curtis, the protective one, who attended LSU and plays the PGA Tour Canada.

Otherwise it was a pretty easy-going, drama-free shoot, all due to the confidence and self-assurance of our cover subject. As the saying goes, she looks like she can kick your butt and then kick your butt, which she did in a *GolfDigest.com* video series this month boxing with our interviewer while he peppered her with questions.

We've come a long way from a year ago when the LPGA condemned our choice of Paulina Gretzky (and Holly Sonders in 2013) as the cover images for *Golf Digest*'s annual fitness issue. *Mea culpa*, ladies. You can have stunning beauty and the highest level of golf performance at the same time, as demonstrated (page 100) this year by Lexi, Stacy Lewis, Cheyenne Woods and **Michelle Wie** (pictured): Have you ever seen anyone more fit in evening wear?

LPGA players not only outdrive the average guy by 20-plus yards, but they do it with the same clubhead speed we have. We can learn more from them not because they swing like



MALE 14-HDCP •
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Avg. swing speed (mph)

93.4 / 94

Avg. driving distance (yds)

228 / 250

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us, but because we should swing like them. They don't just muscle the ball and make up for swing flaws with strength. And our whole staff concurs:

Associate Editor Steve Hennessey says, "You only have to spend five minutes on an LPGA range to recognize they hit the ball better than anybody you know on a first-name basis."

"The average LPGA player outworks and out-exercises the average PGA Tour player, because they have to," says Assistant Editor Keely Levins.

What else can we learn? Deputy Editor Max Adler, author of the cover story, says: "Have the audacity to put golf in perspective and go out on top, like Lorena Ochoa. Treat your fellow tour players like siblings, and life will be more fun. The sorority of the LPGA Tour puts the fraternity of the PGA Tour to shame. And don't be afraid to play the forward tees, even if you're really good."

Senior Writer Ron Sirak says: "I've probably seen Annika Sorenstam hit more shots in competition than either of her husbands, and I can say this: She won 72 times and was not able to work the ball either way and was an average putter. But she hit the straight ball better than anyone, and her swing repeated like Hogan's. And she forgot about poor shots or missed putts immediately and focused on the next shot."

Says Senior Writer Guy Yocom: "I haven't heard an LPGA player drop an F-bomb on TV in 20 years. And yet, they manage to get round the course."

PLAY LIKE A GIRL has become our new mantra for many reasons, including the one Max cites in the cover story. LPGA pros hit up on their drives about 3 degrees, maximizing distance instead of hitting ever so slightly downward—1 degree—like PGA Tour pros who are going more for accuracy. One exception is bomber Bubba Watson, who usually swings up at the ball. Bubba plays like a girl? Good advice, if you ask us. 



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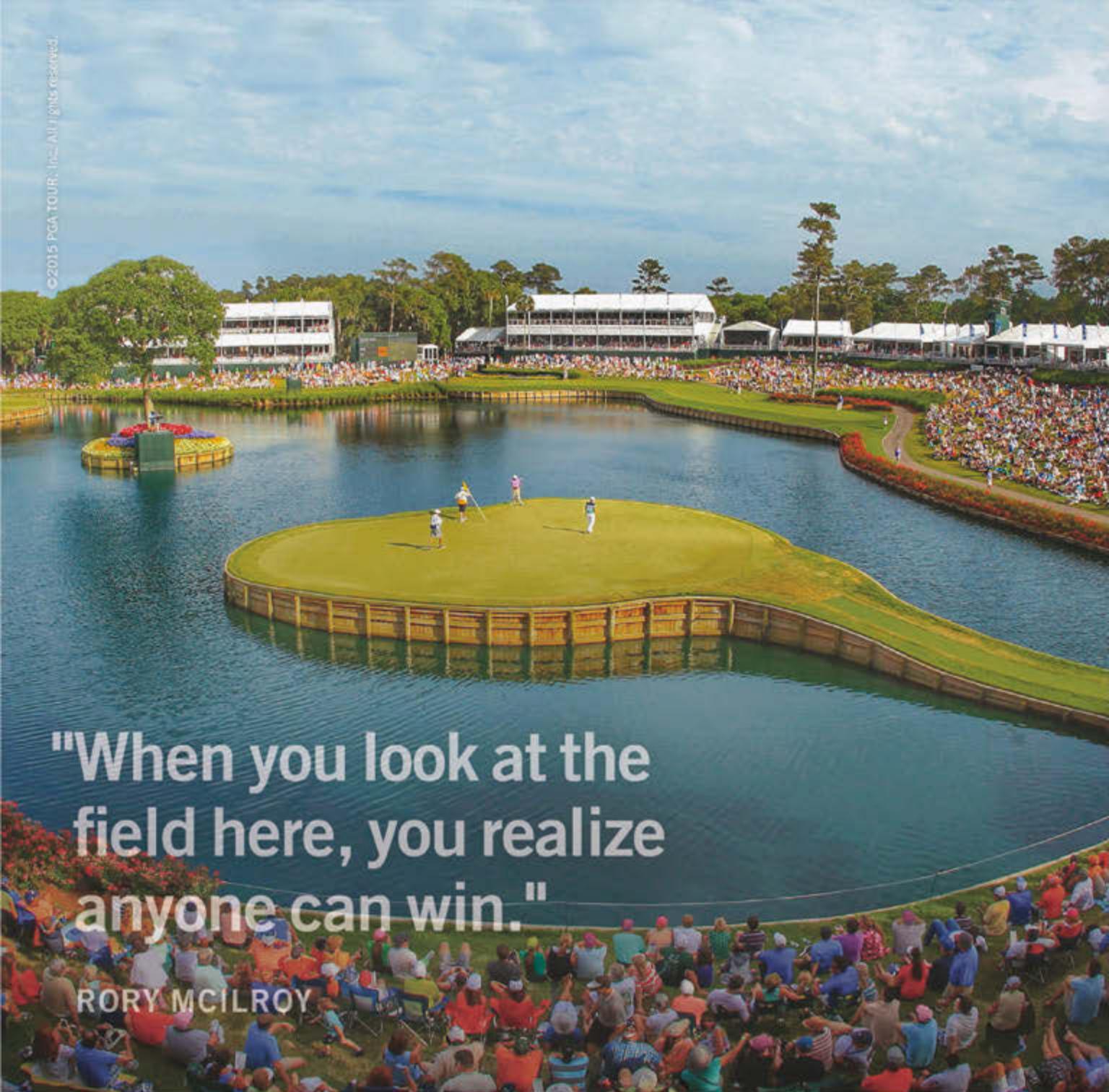


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Channeling Ben Hogan

Why I'm looking back 50 years for good advice

BY KEVIN STREELMAN

I PLAYED MY FIRST FULL YEAR on the PGA Tour in 2008, and by 2012 I felt like I needed to make some improvements in my swing to take the next step and win some tournaments.

I've always been fascinated with golf history, and I see Ben Hogan's swing as the ultimate model of athleticism and efficiency. It's impossible to look at Hogan's action and not think there are things you could use in your swing. The equipment might have been different then, but what Mr. Hogan did with those clubs is timeless.

I've worked with teacher Wayne DeFrancesco in kind of a new-school way to merge some of Hogan's classic technique into my game. Wayne and I trade video back and forth of my swing and Hogan's, and it's made me more athletic and consistent. I won in 2013 and 2014, and I'm ready to keep it going.

—WITH MATTHEW RUDY

**BACK LEG BRACES**

 Hogan's fluid, wide takeaway is a great one to copy. My left arm is straight here, and my right elbow moves back along my side, which keeps the grip in front of my sternum. I'm turning on top of a quiet lower body, but I'm definitely bracing into my right leg. It feels like tension in my right thigh muscle—not a big move back and off the ball. My feet stay planted, and I'm using the ground for leverage. Hogan sure looks connected to the ground.



ARMS IN FRONT



 Hogan frequently compared the golf swing to an athletic throwing motion—basically a half-sidearm, half-underhand throw. With your arms in front of your chest on the downswing, you're in position to compress the ball while rotating out of the way. Most amateurs have too much space between the right elbow and right hip at this point—and that's a recipe for a chunked or thinned shot. I want my right elbow tucked in close (above, left).

"The swing is basically a half-sidearm, half-underhand throw."

OGIO
shirt, \$60
pants, \$80
belt, \$40
WILSON
hat, \$20
FOOTJOY
glove, \$19
AUDEMARS
PIGUET
watch, \$26,000



HIPS STAY DEEP

One thing I work on daily is keeping my right knee from shooting out toward the ball on the downswing. Look at all the room Hogan has to swing his arms in front of his lower body. By keeping my rear end against my bag in this drill, my hips stay deep and move toward the target, which creates room to get the club in front and compress the ball with body rotation. Thank you, Mr. Hogan. You're still the man!

Kevin Streelman, a 2001 Duke graduate, has won twice on the PGA Tour.

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#15

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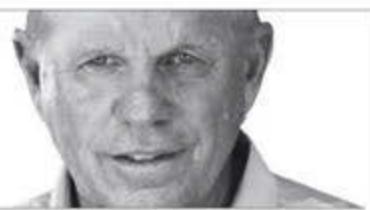
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Approach G8



Take the Easy Way Out

Ball forward, spank the sand behind it

I here are all kinds of shots I could teach you from a greenside bunker, but I'll bet you'd be happy with just one: A shot that puts you somewhere on the green—every time.

I know you're feeling some nerves when you climb into the sand, so I'm going to keep this simple. It's mostly about the setup. Holding your sand wedge in front of you, turn the face open about 20 degrees, then take your grip.

Get into your stance with the ball way forward—opposite the heel of your front foot. Then set a little more weight on your front side, but don't push your hands toward the target. You want the shaft to be straight up and down.

Make a half backswing, then really spank the sand two to three inches behind the ball. Here's the visual: You're throwing the sand and the ball out of the bunker together. Easy—and it works.

BUTCH'S BASICS

 One of the big issues on bunker shots is, people think they're supposed to cut across the ball. When you do that, you lose the sliding action of the club. Why? Because that action comes from the face being open, and it's hard to hold the face open when it's cutting to the left. Swing out to your target, like on a normal pitch shot.

Butch Harmon
is a Golf Digest
Teaching
Professional.



"On a long par 5, your tee shot dictates how you play the hole."

Position Golf

Playing smart always beats whaling away

Hilton Head's Harbour Town Golf Links and I have a long history. It was the first course I was involved in designing, back in 1969. I was at the height of my playing career when the owner, Charles Fraser, asked me if I had any interest in designing courses. I thought it would be fun, and suggested Pete Dye and I work together on Harbour Town, site of the RBC Heritage April 16-19. I made 23 site visits and realized course design would be one of my greatest joys. Harbour Town's 588-yard 15th is a good par 5. The dogleg-left to a small green requires clear thinking, especially with a tournament on the line.

—WITH ROGER SCHIFFMAN

IN THE PENALTY BOX

If you bail out to the right—or had to aim there because you were blocked by the trees—you'll have a difficult pitch. That's your penalty: having to play over a bunker to a green sloping away from you. You'll remember that next time.

SET UP YOUR THIRD

If your tee shot ends up in this bunker, aim at a conservative target to the right. Hit a shot that leaves you a comfortable distance to play your third into the throat or full length of the green.

FAVOR THE RIGHT

The smart play for the long hitter is to put the tee shot in the right side of the fairway to have a chance of knocking it on in two. For the average golfer, the second shot should also favor the right to ensure a clear approach.

CLASSIC HARBOUR TOWN

The trees were shorter when we designed the course. Now, tall trees guard several greens, and if you're on the wrong side, you'll have to draw or fade your approach. Here, two trees and a pond protect the left side, so you have to stay right.

COURSE CONDITIONS

Harbour Town's big finish



For most of the round at Harbour Town, dense tree lines shelter you from the winds that blow off Calibogue Sound. But when you get to the par-3 17th and par-4 18th, which are on the water and totally unprotected, fierce gusts are the norm. It can be a different ball game that last half hour. The lesson is—and this applies no matter where you play—be ready to adjust to changing conditions. Golf is about handling whatever challenges come your way and not letting any surprises throw you off.

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ENTIRELY BY DESIGN.



BLACK LABEL

OASIS

Welcome to Lincoln Black Label. An exclusive ownership experience that reflects the highest expression of the Lincoln brand. A curated collection of designer interior themes and a host of exclusive membership privileges that include a premium maintenance plan covering everything from recommended service to wear-item replacement.* The Oasis theme (pictured here) is artfully detailed with exquisite natural shades of Venetian leather that make your drive both calming and rejuvenating. We invite you to learn more about Lincoln Black Label online.

Lincoln.com/blacklabel



*SEE A LINCOLN BLACK LABEL DEALERSHIP FOR COMPLETE DETAILS.



ANDRES GONZALES

AGE 31

RESIDES Lakewood, Wash.

STORY Turned to golf after breaking his neck at age 11 while diving into a shallow lake. Finished 11th on the Web.com Tour in 2014 to earn his PGA Tour card.

NO RAZOR REQUIRED
Facial hair wasn't allowed on the golf team at UNLV. As a pro I grew it out as a joke and still have it.

BACKWARD APPROACH
If you look at my bag, you'll see I have the clubs set in reverse. When I was young I didn't want to dig through the headcovers to get to the irons and wedges, so I put those on top. I tried switching but kept putting clubs in the wrong spot, so I went back to doing it.

—WITH E. MICHAEL JOHNSON

CLUB	YDS*
DRIVER	278
3-WOOD	265
3-HYBRID	237
4-IRON	222
5-IRON	210
6-IRON	198
7-IRON	185
8-IRON	170
9-IRON	156
PW	138
GW	128
SW	115
LW	100
*carry distance	

Yardage book: I have it covered
My college teammate, J.C. Deacon, was an assistant coach at UNLV before becoming Florida's head coach. He had this stitched for me.

FAIRWAY WOOD

SPECS Callaway Big Bertha V Series 3-wood, 16° loft, Mitsubishi Diamana 'ahina shaft, X-flex, 42% inches

I used the old Callaway War Bird for a long time. This has a similar V-shape sole that helps get the ball out of the rough and in the air.

HYBRID

SPECS Adams Idea Pro, 20° loft, Aldila VS By You prototype shaft, X-flex, 40 inches

I've been using this hybrid since 2006. I don't know why I've had it so long, other than it's incredibly versatile. Plus, it goes exactly the distance I want it to go.

WEDGES

SPECS Callaway Mack Daddy 2 Tour Grind (52°, 56° and 60°), True Temper Dynamic Gold X100 Tour Issue shafts

The bounce on my wedges are similar (9 to 11 degrees). Roger Cleveland fits me, and we found what matches my swing. My wife's name, Kristin, is stamped on these clubs. I play golf, and she makes my life run. Works for both of us.



Simple stripe
I'm not one to get crazy marking my ball. I put a small red line on the sidestamp of my Titleist Pro V1x. I use red because it's one of UNLV's team colors.

**DRIVER**

SPECS Callaway Big Bertha Alpha 815, 9° loft, Mitsubishi Diamana 'ahina shaft, X-flex, 44% inches

The actual loft is closer to 11 degrees. The five-gram weight is in the toe and the seven-gram in the heel. All I know is, this club works.

**A nickname is born**

My Half Man, Half Amazing nickname came while talking about Twitter. We wanted something cool, and that's what we came up with.

IRONS

SPECS Callaway Apex 4-iron; Callaway Apex MB 5-iron to 9-iron; Callaway Mack Daddy 2 PW, True Temper Dynamic Gold X100 shafts

I wanted a little extra girth on the 4-iron to add some height and forgiveness. The blades help me maintain consistent distance control.

PUTTER

SPECS Odyssey Works Versa 2-Ball Fang, 36 inches, 2.5° loft, 360 grams (headweight), Winn Long grip

I had a black line put on the 2-Ball alignment aid. I was aiming a little right, and that solved it. It's only the fifth or sixth putter I've used in my whole life.

**A putter with ferocious fangs**

Normally I just go with the putter cover that comes with the club. This one was based off the paint job for an old fighter plane. It's also fitting for my 2-Ball Fang putter.

Deep thoughts
I was a journalism major and keep a diary. I thought I might write a book on tour life, but that sounds like an awful lot of work.

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For more than 10 years, Jimmy Walker had plugged away as a professional golfer before winning the 2013 Frys.com Open at age 34. It was his 188th start on the PGA Tour. Then it all fell into place. He won two more times in his next seven events. "He's definitely a late bloomer," says Butch Harmon, his teacher since 2011, "but he's also going to be around a long time."

His performance so far this year suggests he will. Walker got into a playoff at the Hyundai Tournament of Champions, won the Sony Open in Hawaii and finished two back at the Farmers Insurance Open to take an early lead in the FedEx Cup standings. Last September, he was one of the U.S. team's few bright spots in his first Ryder Cup, winning 2½ points and defeating Lee Westwood in singles.

The Baylor grad is also an amateur astronomer—he and his wife, Erin, even moved to a remote town near San Antonio for a better night sky. Walker is not your typical tour player. Harmon calls his swing "old school," which is just fine with them. "We didn't want to create a new swing, just take what he does naturally and make it better."

—WITH ROGER SCHIFFMAN



Jimmy Walker

An old-school swing with some modern touches

A STURDY START

Walker used to have a narrow stance, but his coach, Butch Harmon, wanted him to swing from a wider platform. "Getting wide dropped his head behind the ball more. That's good for the driver." Notice Walker's balance and symmetry at address. "His weight is 50-50," Harmon says. "He's not leaning one way or the other."

STRETCHING BACK

"Jimmy used to get the club narrow and too much to the inside during the takeaway," Harmon says. "Now look how far his left hand is away from his head as he goes back. His left arm is really stretched out. Plus, the shaft swings back more in line with his feet instead of going quickly to the inside."

CONTROL THE TOP

Great flexibility is a hallmark of Walker's swing, but it has worked against him in the past. "He has the ability to turn almost too much," Harmon says. "We've reduced his turn a bit so he has an easier time delivering the club to the ball." Harmon also likes how Walker makes a good coil without moving outside his right leg.

► DRIVING DISTANCE



► BIRDIES PER ROUND



SOURCE: SHOTLINK



KEEPING IT WIDE

Halfway down, you can see another big change they've made. "He's much wider coming down—look at the space between the shaft and his head," Harmon says. "He used to be so long going back that when he started down, the club would almost lay on his shoulder. Now his hands drop straight down."

LOTS OF LEG ACTION

Walker's knee drive is a bit of a throwback, according to Harmon. "Most modern players have the front knee straight at impact, but Jimmy's still has some bend," Harmon says. "And his head is still back—that's all old school. We continue to work on getting his spine more on top of the ball at impact. It's a work in progress."

FINISH STRONG

In the follow-through, Walker's full arm extension matches his extension going back. Harmon says: "Notice at the finish his right shoulder is so much closer to the target than his left, and he's totally up on his front foot. A beautiful unwinding of the body." And the swing speed to average more than 300 yards off the tee.

PRO-FILE

JIMMY WALKER
36 / 6-foot-2
180 pounds
Boerne, Texas

DRIVER
Titleist 915D2
9.5 degrees

BALL
Titleist Pro V1x

Self-test: Do you see a different line when you get over the ball?

Get Every Putt Started on Line

How to tweak your setup to fix your aim

We've heard so much talk about the "ideal" setup for putting, but a lot of it is contradictory. How close to the ball should you stand? Do your eyes have to be over it? Should your eye line be straight? Do you have to stand square?

Players have putted great from all kinds of setup positions. That's because setting up in a way that lets you see your aiming point accurately is

the most important factor, not specifically *how* you set up.

Two players I teach look almost like they're playing a different game on the greens. Jonas Blixt stands far away from the ball, so his eyes are way inside the target line. Alex Rocha is much closer, and he has his head tilted to the right—almost like a sniper. But when I measure them on the SAM PuttLab, they both aim exactly where they want the ball to go.

Instead of trying to build a textbook setup, use my technique to develop your own setup so you can line up accurately every time. The best part? You can apply this trick no matter

what kind of stroke you use—swinging on an arc, straight back and through, it doesn't matter.

Here's how to test your aim: Find a straight 10-footer, and set four balls at specific intervals—at address, a foot down the line, four feet short of the hole and on the front edge of the cup.

As you approach the first ball from behind, make sure you see the line of balls as straight. Then take your stance, and trace an imaginary line through the balls to the hole. If the line still looks straight, you're good to go (*below*). If any ball appears out of line, your eye dominance is distorting your view. This will affect your aim, so you have to adjust.

There are three things you can do: (1) Change the distance you stand from the ball, (2) raise or lower your head, and (3) tilt your head so your eye line is more horizontal or more vertical. One of these or a combination of them should work—you need to experiment. You know you've got it right when the line of balls looks straight at address. Once you've got it, set an alignment stick in front of your toes and another crossing it in line with the heel of the putter. Practice getting into that setup, and remember the look and feel to be more consistent on the greens.

Jorge Parada, a Golf Digest Best Young Teacher, works with several tour players at the Tour Academy TPC Sawgrass, site of the Players Championship May 7-10.



PERFECT AIM

If you line up several balls and they still look straight at address, your setup is ideal.

DREAM BIG



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My work with world No. 1 Lydia Ko focuses on the synchronization of her body pivot and arm swing.



Perfect Pivots

How to train your body to add power

Ihe pivot motion is the lifeblood of any golf swing. How the body winds going back and unwinds coming through is the key to creating energy and transferring it to the ball. In my upcoming book, *The A Swing: The Alternative Approach to Great Golf*, I explain why it's so important to synchronize the body pivot with the arm swing. All good players get this right. Learn to pivot correctly with these four steps.

David Leadbetter is a Golf Digest Teaching Professional.

1. GET INTO YOUR TILT



► Without a club, mimic your address posture, but place your hands on the sides of your legs, with your right hand a few inches lower than your left. Your spine will tilt slightly to the right.

2. ROTATE TO THE TOP



► Simulate your backswing turn, keeping your arms against your sides. As you coil your upper body and shift your weight away from the target, your right hand will slide up and your left hand will slide down.

3. SHIFT TO THE LEFT



► Before you start unwinding, transfer most of your weight from your right foot to your left with a lateral shift of the lower body. Your pelvis and legs should shift toward the target, but your head should stay in place.

4. TURN TO THE TARGET



► Just like in an actual golf swing, rotate your hips and torso so they face the target. Let your weight settle into the heel of your left foot, and make sure your hands return to where they were at the beginning.

DREAM BIG



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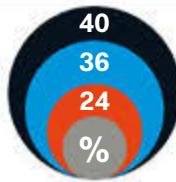
The Gold Medal winning JPX-850 Forged helped Mizuno win the most Hot List Gold Medals in irons yet again in 2015. The JPX-850 Forged is the first iron made from a Grain Flow Forging infused with BORON, resulting in a material 30% stronger than steel. This revolutionary material gives you the feel you expect from a Mizuno forging with unmatched distance, forgiveness and consistency.



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Under pressure you play...

- The same
- Worse
- Better

SOURCE: GOLF DIGEST READERS



Stress Relief

When you're feeling nervous, sloooow down

Ben Hogan once told me that he got so nervous playing in a tournament, he felt like he was jumping out of his skin. That confirmed to me that we all get jittery from time to time, whether it's you, me, or the great Ben Hogan.

The feeling you get is the anxiety of being in competition and failing. So how should you deal with it? What helped me the most early in my career, when I wasn't keeping my composure at the end of big rounds, was a tip from Byron Nelson. He told me when I was under

pressure to walk a beat slower. I was walking too fast, and rushing my decision-making and my swing. When I slowed down between shots, my swing rhythm improved, and so did my results.

Let me give you one more tip: Visualize a player with a smooth swing, and try to emulate him or her. Sam Snead had the most beautiful rhythm I ever saw, and I liked to picture his swing when the heat was on. I had that visual in mind because I'd watched him hit balls a lot. It really helped me keep cool.

—WITH NICK SEITZ

ELEMENTARY WATSON



 You've no doubt heard that you should take deep breaths to ease tension. Lee Trevino took it a step further. He liked to yawn deliberately to force more air into his lungs. You're probably yawning now from the power of suggestion.

Tom Watson is a Golf Digest Playing Editor.

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Pitching Basics

How to loft it or let it run and get a kick-in putt

THE HIGH PITCH ▶

You're 20 or 30 yards short of the green, and the pin's just a few steps on. You'll have to fly it most of the way. Grab your highest lofted wedge, and take a narrow stance, with most of your weight on the front foot (1). Your stance should be open, the ball well forward, and your grip pressure light.

Swing back to about hip high, and as you come down keep your wrists firm (2). If you flip your wrists, you'll have trouble hitting the ball solid or getting enough height on the shot.

Instead, think of it as a mini swing: Do all the things you do in your normal swing, just to a lesser degree. This will keep you from using all arms, which I see a lot of amateurs do. Turn your shoulders, and let your body pivot naturally.

At impact, don't try to help the ball up. Swing through and let the loft on the clubface do the work (3). If you close the face at all, the ball will come out low and run. Holding the face open through impact will produce maximum trajectory.





SOURCE: SHOTLINK



◀ THE LOW PITCH

If you have more green to work with, grab something with a little less loft—I use my 54-degree. Your setup is similar to the high pitch, but the ball is centered and your stance is not as open (1). You're going to want this one to come out lower and run more.

Pick a spot on the green about a third of the way to the hole—that's where you should land the ball. So, if the flagstick is 20 yards onto the putting surface, try to land it six or seven

steps on and let it run to the cup.

For the swing, I think about it as a big putting stroke. That keeps my legs from getting too involved in the motion and reminds me to rotate my torso back and through (2). I try to feel as if I'm hooking the chip, letting the clubface turn over so the toe is pointing toward the sky at the finish (3). This is important because if you pop this shot up, it's going to stop short, and you'll be looking at a long putt.

—WITH KEELY LEVINS

Ryan Palmer, 38, has three wins on the PGA Tour.

Photographs by J.D. Cuban

Power or Precision?

Pick an iron based on your style of play



Iron design makes its home at the corner of distance and direction. Some irons help you hit the ball higher and farther. Others help you shape it. Irons with large faces, deep cavities and wide soles are clearly meant for distance. These clubs have thin faces that flex like a driver's and produce more yards, more forgiveness on mis-hits and a higher ball flight. But some players aren't concerned as much with mistakes as they are with enhancing their skills. They prefer to control the club and their ball flight using compact iron shapes with narrow soles. The first three irons here offer workability, and the others emphasize power. The iron you try should provide what matters most to you.

1 NIKE VAPOR PRO

► One way to make a forged blade more forgiving is to redesign the back (shift weight toward the toe) so that the sweet spot is more in line with the center of the face.

PRICE \$1,000

2 BEN HOGAN FT. WORTH 15

► Want distance control? These forged irons come in 28 lofts (20 to 47 degrees). That makes it easier to find the "6-iron" for you, whether it's 28, 29, 30, 31 or 32 degrees.

PRICE \$1,200



3 CALLAWAY XR PRO

► Compact irons can feature flexible faces, too. Borrowing an idea from the company's metalwoods, the face wraps around the topline and sole to make off-center strikes fly farther.

PRICE \$900

4 XXIO PRIME

► A thin face is great, but why not use titanium to get more distance? Also, why not make it more flexible lower on the face where we hit it most of the time? Done and done.

PRICE \$2,000

5 ADAMS BLUE

► By now, we know a slot can help the face to flex more, especially on hits low on the face. But these irons also give your shots an extra boost upward with the ultralight, thinner-tip shaft.

PRICE \$700

6 TAYLORMADE AEROBURNER

► Stronger lofts help shots fly with more speed, but the ball also needs to maintain trajectory for real distance. This sole slot acts like a hinge, increasing your launch angle.

PRICE \$700

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life

THINK YOUNG, PLAY HARD

Scene-Stealer

Finally, a golf movie
starring someone who
can actually play golf



Actors Jeremy Sumpter and Jillian Murray, riding bikes in the Hollywood Hills, Jan. 18, 2015.

"The Squeeze," a golf-meets-gambling thriller, premieres in April.

Suspension of disbelief helps golfers look past the awkward swings of most actors in movies and television shows. But when it comes to Jeremy Sumpter, who plays the lead role of Augie in the new film "The Squeeze," there's nothing to excuse.

Sumpter's got game. He plays to a 1.1 Handicap Index at his home course, Moorpark (Calif.) Country Club, and shot a personal-best 66 in 2013. He also recently used a driver and 7-iron to hole out from the fairway on the 494-yard 13th at Angeles Nation-

◀
NIKE
hoodie, \$110
shorts, \$70
shoes, \$130

▶
NIKE
shirt, \$75
skort, \$75
COLE HAAN
shoes, \$196

al in Southern California—his first double eagle. But it's his on-course bravado that sold director and producer Terry Jastrow to cast him for "The Squeeze," a golf-meets-gambling thriller that premieres in April.

"I knew it would be my golf that would get me this movie," says Sumpter, 26, who also had roles in the movie "Soul Surfer" and TV's "Friday Night Lights." "So I set up a round with Terry, and he took me to Bel-Air Country Club in L.A. I can do a trick shot where I scoop the ball up with my putter, fling it over my head and then smash it on the way back down. I bet Terry that if I could do the shot and hit a

green from like 100 yards out, he

would have to give me the part.

Well, I scooped it, hit it and my

ball landed about 10 feet from

the pin and trickled just off the

green. I was hired on the spot."

Sumpter's boldness also spilled over into the production and casting of the film. Not only did he receive a co-producer credit, his first, he got to help pick his character's love interest, Jillian Murray. Her lack of golf skills was far less important than her obvious charisma and sex appeal, Sumpter half-jokes. And when she made a "passable" golf swing on her fourth audition, she got the part.

"Before this movie, I didn't

know what a par was or that you use different clubs for different shots," says Murray, 30, who has appeared in several movies and TV shows, including MTV's "Awkward." "Then I got two months of golf instruction at Bel-Air. It made a huge difference. I don't think they used a double for any of my swings."

Murray's golf interest has since waned a little. "I can take it or leave it," she says. Sumpter, however, plays every chance he gets. "They were basically paying me to play at the Wynn in Vegas—where we shot scenes for the movie. It doesn't get any better than that. . . . Honestly, without golf, I don't know what I'd do." —RON KASPRISKE





Undercover Tour Pro

My caddie has my back, so I've got his

BY NOW YOU'VE HEARD that caddies are suing the tour over bibs. My caddie is part of the lawsuit, so I've been privy to all the back and forth for the past year and a half. As you've seen, the chest and back of the bib usually go to the title sponsor, with the FedEx Cup and PGA Tour logos on the front pockets. The caddies want a taste of the action, or at least the right to sell the left breast. ▶ The tour runs the program that gives caddies the option of wearing a sponsor's logo on their hat, but the top caddie stands to make only about 11 grand. For what it's worth, I've played European Tour events where the bibs had a dozen logos. But rather than dive into the legalese of who owns the marketing real estate on a person's body in the context of independent contractors and yada yada yada, what it comes down to is this: The PGA Tour could do better by the caddies.

Is their treatment better than 20 years ago? Absolutely. Is it up to 2015 standards? A lot of these guys lead pretty hard lives, and it wouldn't cost the tour much to make them a little better.

I know what you're probably thinking: *They're caddies!* They chose a notoriously insecure form of labor. Every caddie out here chose to go through life with someone else's name on his back. So set up a tent behind the scoring trailer, throw 'em some hot dogs and be done with it?

My caddie has a college degree. Last year I paid him \$270,000. His travel expenses were significant. Still, that's serious income. I'm glad he can set up his wife and two children in a nice house not far from a major airport. Given what I make, and that he's right next to me as I'm making it, that seems fair. Is he indispensable? Well, I read my own putts, and anyone with half a brain can pace a yardage. But when the stakes are what

they are and I can have only one guy in my corner, my caddie's the guy I want. That's why he's worth every penny.

Sure, you'll see players win with a random buddy or brother-in-law on the bag. I've seen Freddie Couples shoot 64 with a girlfriend who had no idea how to pull a pin. Players work differently. Webb Simpson might not know how to take the club back anymore without Paul Tesori standing beside him. Webb's a great player, but the fact Paul played on tour lets Webb trust him to a high degree, and together they're a real team.

Which is all to say, being a PGA Tour caddie is a big-time job. They're part of the TV show. They're half the dialogue that gets picked up on course, and they give interviews after the round. I can't think of any other line of work where a guy can make half a million a year but is treated so dismissively.

My caddie isn't allowed in the clubhouse. At PGA National, caddies had to wait in a shed during a severe lightning storm, which was absurdly dangerous. European Tour caddies get clubhouse credentials. LPGA Tour players get a "buddy badge" to bring in whomever they wish, which is often their caddie. Normally I eat with my wife or other players, but I'd like the option.

At Torrey Pines they ran out of parking, and the fix was making caddies park at the glider airport, which is a 20-minute walk to the first tee. Maybe that doesn't sound like a big deal, but these guys need to be on time. Gestures of disrespect add up in a workplace. Like the tour won't grant a caddie a credential to look for work unless a player has signed for him. "This isn't a job fair," one lifelong caddie was told. And back to the bibs: Originally all they wanted was a modest pension plan and a boost to their health care.

The tour just canceled the annual caddie meeting. I don't know how the lawsuit will play out, but I can't help but root for the little guy. —WITH MAX ADLER



TOO LONG FOR TOUR.



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Their loss is your gain.

AERO
BURNER
Irons





Rules of the Weird

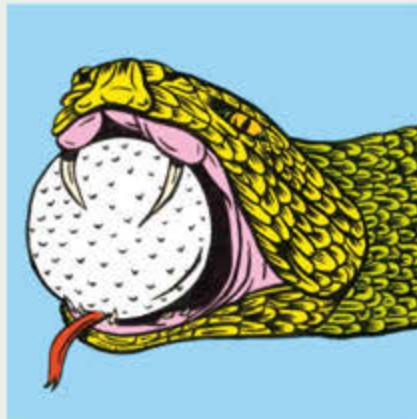
They might sound odd, but these decisions are based on actual events

Considering the *Decisions on the Rules of Golf* has almost 600 pages of on-course situations and how to deal with them, it stands to reason some of those address extremely rare events. If you're looking for a conversation starter, here are several of the most unusual rulings in the book. —RON KASPRISKE

1

DECISION 23/6.5

If you encounter a snake during your round—and are brave enough to inspect it up close—remember this distinction: A snake that's alive is considered an outside agency, but a snake that's dead can be treated as a loose impediment.



2

DECISION 27/6

You and your buddy hit blind tee shots that seem to land in roughly the same area. Your buddy finds a ball and hits his second shot. You then search for your ball, but you find his instead. You realize he hit your ball. What happens next? In match play, he loses the hole. In stroke play, your buddy gets a two-shot penalty

and must play his ball. Because you began to search for your ball, you would have to find your buddy's ball within five minutes of the time you began searching. After five minutes, your ball would be considered lost, and you would have to put another ball into play under penalty of stroke and distance.

3

DECISIONS 26-1/7 & 26-1/8

If you hit a shot into a water hazard and the ball flows out-of-bounds, the ball is out-of-bounds. Conversely, if you hit your shot out-of-bounds, and it flows back onto the course, it's in play.

4

DECISION 13-2/32

Even if a wall looks ready to collapse, you can't improve your line of play by removing loose stones from it. It's a two-shot penalty in stroke play and loss of hole in a match.

5

DECISION 1-2/10

If you have to play a shot near a cactus, and you're worried about getting pricked by needles, you may pad your body with a towel as long as you don't violate Rule 13-2 (fairly taking a stance). But you can't cover the cactus with the towel. The penalty is two shots in stroke play or loss of hole in match play.

6

DECISION 24-2b/14

You look on in horror as your tee shot caroms off a tree and bounces inside the clubhouse. Good news: So long as the building is not considered out-of-bounds, one of your options could be to open a window and hit your next shot outside. Similarly, if your shot somehow wound up inside a barn that wasn't O.B., you could open the barn doors to hit it out.



7

DECISION 1-4/3

If someone impales a flagstick into the green away from the actual hole, you don't get to replay your shot if you unknowingly play toward the flagstick. Your shot stands.

8

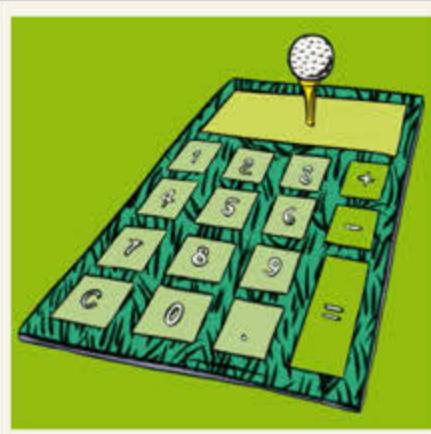
DECISION 23/3

A half-eaten pear found in a bunker is a loose impediment and cannot be removed before you play your shot from the sand. It doesn't matter that there are no pear

9

DECISION 14-3/16

You can't use a device during the round to calculate the effective distance between two points (factoring in wind or elevation). But you can use one to determine what a 10-percent increase in yardage means or for converting yards to meters.



THE BALL THAT CHANGED THE BALL.



THE NEW CHROME SOFT

There's never been a Urethane Tour ball with an extremely soft, low-spinning core that also generates tremendous ball speeds. Now there is. The new SoftFast Core™ is exactly that, incredibly soft and extremely fast. Chrome Soft has changed the ball.



#SOFTFASTCORE

Blue Diamonds

Punta Cana has polished its golf options with two seaside gems

Depending on which way you turn, your impression of the Punta Cana region in the Caribbean island nation of the Dominican Republic can change dramatically. Head northeast from the airport—the largest privately owned international airport in the world—and you'll encounter the all-inclusive resorts and tourist areas that see more than two million vacationers each year. There are great beaches, casinos, all the tchotchke shops you and your credit cards can handle; there are even some decent golf options. ▶ Take my advice: If budget allows, head in the opposite direction. South of the airport you'll find two tranquil golf-resort communities that somehow manage to offer all the drama and splendor of five-star hotels without taking



Corales and Punta Espada might be the best one-two punch in the Caribbean.



Punta Espada's third green and fourth tee box. Translated, Punta Espada means "sword's tip."



away from nature's finest work. Hotel rooms that come with outdoor showers and personal golf carts stand unobtrusively next to tropical rainforests, picturesque grottoes and sparsely populated beaches.

And then there's the golf. Teeth of the Dog, 45 miles west in La Romana, established the Dominican Republic as a golf destination in the 1970s. But two relative newcomers are going to keep it there. In the past decade, Punta Espada and Corales have opened on the island's eastern shore—two magnificent seaside experiences that are arguably the best one-two punch in the entire Caribbean. Certainly the best most golfers have never heard of.

Punta Espada is the elder, having opened in late 2006. It was designed by Jack Nicklaus in the massive 46-square-mile Cap Cana community 15 minutes south of the airport. The course (par 72, 7,396 yards) is big-boy golf. If the 611-yard second hole doesn't jolt you awake, the ocean spray on the 250-yard 13th will.

The par-4 finishing hole at Corales tips out at 501 yards. Good luck.

If you've never been to Scotland or Bandon Dunes, you might not be familiar with factoring wind gusts into green reading. You'll do plenty of that here.

The course has eight holes along the water and a few more with water views. It's also surprisingly hilly. Be sure to trek up to the back tees on No. 2, even if you have no intention of playing from up there. The scenery is spectacular. The course also hosted the Cap Cana Championship, a Champions Tour event, from 2008-'10.

Heading back toward the airport is the equally massive Puntacana Resort & Club, which opened in 1969 and is now the home to Corales, a Tom Fazio design that opened in 2010. Corales matches Punta Espada in terms of seaside beauty but gets the nod for being easier.

Like many Fazio designs, the fairways are wide and forgiving and intended to give a 15-handicapper a chance when the trade winds are howling. There are six waterfront holes, including the 501-yard, par-4 18th. If you want to reach the green in regulation, you'll have to blast one

over waves breaking against the coastline. Although the views aren't as impressive, the holes on the interior portion of the property aren't a letdown. Multiple tee boxes, risk-reward approaches and even optional greens help vary the experience.

Puntacana also has a second course, the respectable 27-hole La Cana Golf Club, designed by P.B. Dye, the youngest son of architect Pete Dye. Several of its holes play along the water, but it's not as picturesque.

How good is the golf here? When Corales was about to open, former senior tour player Jay Overton had to be convinced by the resort's owner, Frank Rainieri, to come down and possibly take over golf operations. By the time his first visit had ended, Overton was ready to buy a house. "Until you see this area, you really can't appreciate what Mr. Rainieri and the others have tried to build here," says Overton, Co-

rales' golf director. "It's a world-class golf destination."

To that end, hotel accommodations at Puntacana and Cap Cana aren't cheap. You can save money by shuttling back and forth between the all-inclusive resorts north of the airport and play these courses à la carte. (See course guide below.) But if you want to live the high life and stay on property, both communities have stay-and-play packages at their elite hotels.

Golf Punta Cana (golfpuntacana.com) offers four- and five-night packages at Cap Cana's Eden Roc hotel that allow you to play all three courses mentioned here (April 6 through Dec. 22). It includes golf, transportation, daily breakfast, and all taxes and gratuities for \$689 per person, per night based on double occupancy. Although not directly on the beach, Eden Roc is an amazing hotel (it's the one where each spacious suite has a private pool, golf cart and outdoor shower.)

At Puntacana, the highly regarded Tortuga Bay Hotel, an oceanfront property designed by the late fashion icon Oscar de la Renta, has several golf packages (April 6 to Nov. 23). One offers four nights' lodging, three meals a day, alcohol, VIP airport transportation, and two rounds at Corales and one round at La Cana for \$569 a person, per night, based on double occupancy. There's another package for the more-affordable Westin Puntacana Resort & Club.

No matter where you stay, make sure to visit Playa Juanillo.

On this beach, a few hundred feet from the aquamarine water, is an idyllic outdoor bar, Juanillo Beach Food & Drinks. It's the type of spot you dream about when you are shoveling snow. Two or five cervezas here and you'll find yourself planning your next visit to Punta Cana.

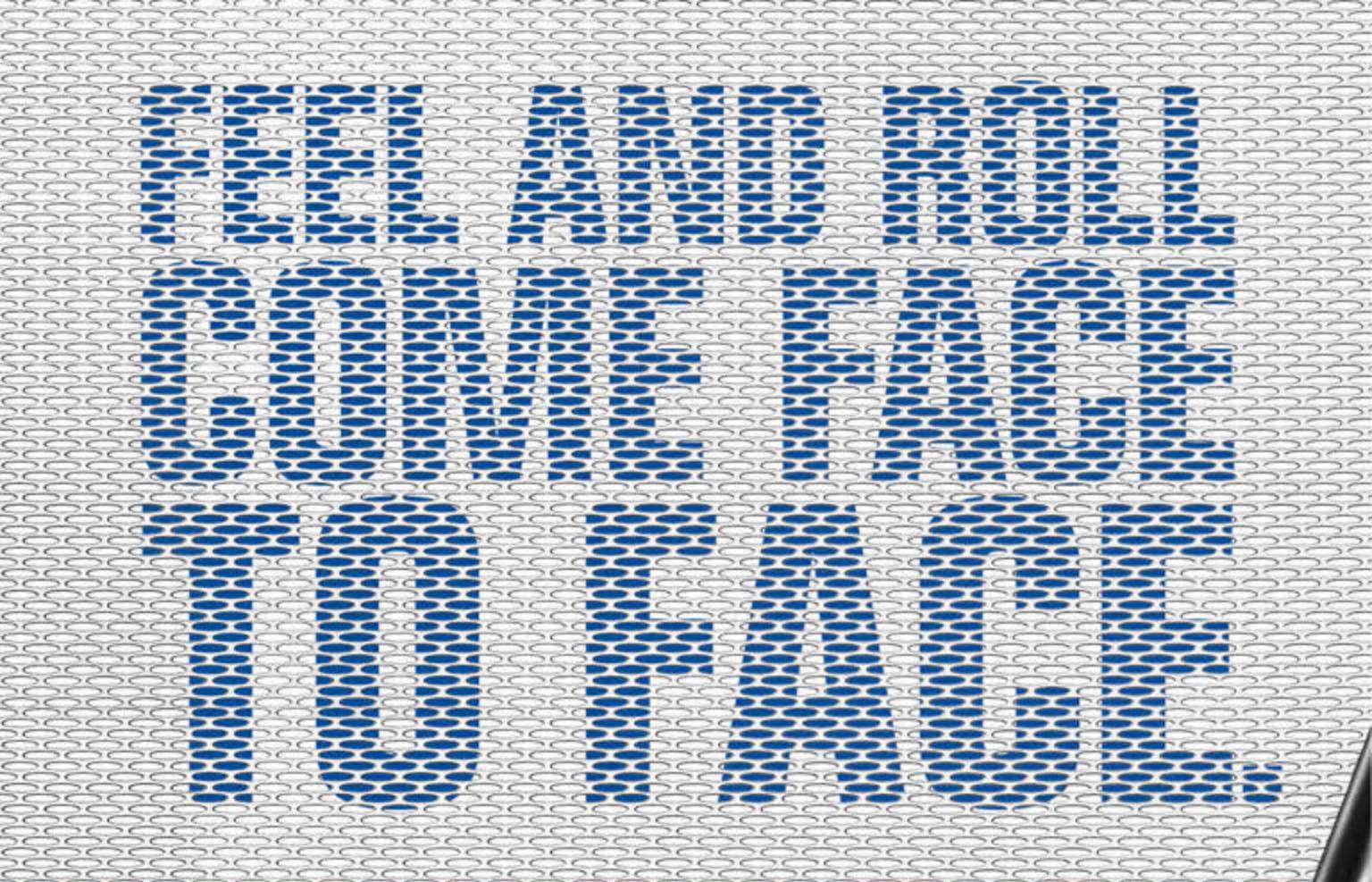
—RON KASPRISKE

► COURSE GUIDE

1. Punta Espada Golf Club, \$275, puntaespada.golf.com

2. Corales Golf Club, \$295, puntacana.com

3. La Cana Golf Club, \$140, puntacana.com



The perfect combination of feel and roll.

The new Fusion RX Insert combines our Major-winning White Hot insert with an ultra-thin mesh and patented Metal-X roll pattern. The result is less skid and quicker roll, with exceptional feel. The dual-fang design and high contrast 2-Ball alignment make the 2-Ball Fang our most accurate 2-Ball ever. You've never felt roll like this.

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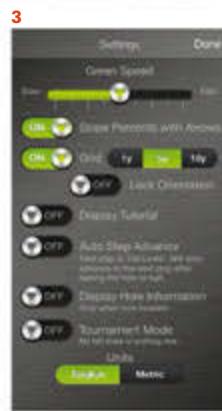
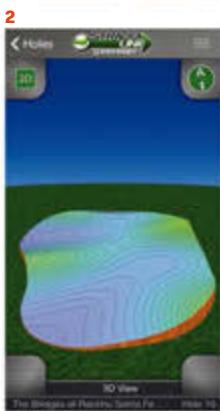


 **ODYSSEY**
WORKS



©2015 Callaway Golf Company. Odyssey, #1 Putter in Golf and the Odyssey Swirl Device, #1 Putter in Golf claim based on combined wins and usage from 2004 – present on the PGA, EPGA, JGTO, Web.com, Champions and LPGA Tours, as reported by the Daniel Survey Co. and Sports Marketing Insights, Inc. Roll claim based on robot testing and the Quintic Roll Measurement System on putts with the new Fusion Rx Insert vs. the original White Hot insert. Accuracy claim based on robot testing on various hit locations measuring dispersion, roll out and overall distance to the hole vs previous 2-Ball models (White Hot 2-Ball, 2-Ball SH, 2-Ball F7).

 **ODYSSEY**
#1 PUTTER IN GOLF.



FEATURES OF STRACKALINE

1. If you input that day's pin position and the location of your ball on the green, the app will show you the correct path to the hole (green speed is factored).
2. Although it's primarily a putting app, you can zoom out and view the entire green to help decide where to land an approach shot.
3. The default setting on the app is for undulations to be shown in relative percent of slope (0 percent being flat). You can also have the slopes displayed in feet. Too much information? You can set it to show only arrows to indicate the direction of the break.
4. An overview of the putting surface shows every undulation on each green, the same way it appears in most professional yardage books.

Getting all the Breaks

Can a new app help you sink more putts?

In an era when smartphones can tell you everything from the weather at a golf course in Nepal to how many inches you come over the top on your downswing, maybe we should have seen this coming. There's now an app that reads greens.

StrackaLine, which started as a company specializing in yardage books, has unveiled its weapon in the war on missed putts. Jim Stracka and his son, Chase, measure courses by placing a laser in the middle of a green and rotating it 360 degrees to record its undulations. The data is fed into a computer and converted into images showing the green's slopes. The images are stored in a database that golfers can access if they get the app and pay for a subscription. Prices range from \$4 (one week) to \$20 (one year).

Golfers can't use the app during tournament rounds or rounds that are posted for handicap purposes (Rule 14-3). Still, players have been registering at a steady pace, Jim says, and he expects business to boom once more greens are added to the database. StrackaLine has analyzed the greens at 400 courses and plans to map 600 more by the end of 2015, including every course in the Myrtle Beach area. StrackaLine charges courses \$3,500 to have their greens mapped and provides, among other things, software to help them oversee the app and better manage their greens (where to water, how often to water, and where to place the pins).

"The lasers we use see everything," Stracka said. "If there's one thing you can count on, it's that there's almost always more break than what meets the eye."

—LUKE KERR-DINEEN

GOLF TIPS

WITH

MATT KUCHAR



SKECHERS
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Want to be a stronger putter?

TIP #5

Sink it on the first putt.



Skechers GO GOLF Pro

Introducing Skechers GO GOLF. The official shoe of Matt Kuchar.
Ultra Lightweight • Increased Stability • Maximum Comfort

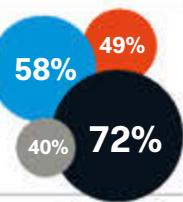
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Will your next set of clubs be custom-fit?
 10-handicapper or lower ►
 11- to 15-handicapper ►
 16- to 20-handicapper ►
 21-handicapper or higher ►



SOURCE: GOLF DATATECH

Get Fit, Play Better

A clubfitting can unlock your potential

BY MIKE STACHURA

YOU'RE MISSING OUT ON GOLF'S most game-changing technology: clubfitting. "A lot of golfers don't know about custom-fitting, or they greatly underestimate the impact of a properly fit set of clubs," says Craig Zimmerman, general manager at RedTail Golf Center in Beaverton, Ore. "They think a clubfitting is for tour pros or better players. But the more they learn, the better golf they'll play." That education begins by visiting a clubfitter, like at RedTail or one of the other top facilities named to our third listing of America's 100 Best Clubfitters. (*Turn the page for our list.*)

In the world of golf equipment, one size doesn't fit all. Especially today when there's almost infinite complexity. A qualified clubfitter makes it simple. "Small changes can make big ripples in your game," says Nick Sherburne, who oversees a team of clubfitters at Club Champion, a national chain of fitting centers on our list. Sherburne and other America's 100 Best Clubfitters we surveyed see the same five problem areas. It's time to start finding out what's wrong and how quickly you and a clubfitter can make it right:

Driver. Your loft is too low or sometimes too high. Achieving the ideal golf-ball spin rate, launch angle and direction is possible only through a launch-monitor fitting. "Because drivers

have different characteristics, not all lofts across all brands are equal," Sherburne says. "Loft has the biggest impact on spin, so getting the right loft to properly spin the ball is critical." Also, the standard shaft length for many drivers is almost always too long. "When we shorten the shaft, golfers hit more solid shots," says Steve Ball of Ball Golf Center in Oklahoma City. "Solid strikes always win the distance race compared to longer shafts that create off-center contact."

Putter. The most overlooked club when it comes to fitting, the putter is the easiest to match to your game. "Contrary to popular belief, putting isn't all about feel," says Dana Upshaw of Dana Golf in Warner Robins, Ga. "Yes, it's important to use a putter that feels good and has visual appeal, but more important is how well the technical specifications fit the golfer to produce a predictable, consistent roll."

Wedges. As iron lofts have gotten stronger, they have created a gap where your wedges start. Throw in the variety of sole grinds and bounce configurations, and you'll need an advanced degree to figure out what you should do. Or you can visit a clubfitter. Says Sherburne: "Players should be gapping off their pitching wedge to create as many full shots as they can. Many players come in with a collection of different brand wedges with different shafts, lie angles, bounces and lengths. Wedges should be an extension of your irons."

Long game. Odds are you're hitting two of your longer clubs—maybe three—about the same distance. "Often you need a 5-iron and a 5-hybrid, or sometimes a 5-wood goes farther than a 3-wood," says Joshua Chernovokas of New York Golf Center (Cool Clubs) in New York City. "You might need a 4-hybrid and a 2-hybrid because the distance separation is too small between consecutive clubs. You cannot buy a modern golf set by the numbers."

Shafts. There are so many shaft options on the market, even computer databases can't keep pace. Consequently, self-fitting can't be the answer, says Brad Fellinger of Fellinger Custom Golf in Hobe Sound, Fla. "Once I correct their shaft flex, they cannot believe it's the same person hitting golf balls," he says. "Their consistency, control and accuracy improve 110 percent."

America's 100 Best Clubfitters

UR LIST is based on three criteria: (1) A facility must be accessible to the public. (2) It must offer an array of clubs from top manufacturers. (3) It must earn high marks from our course-rating panelists and industry sources. We reviewed nominations from more than 700 locations to determine our 100 Best.

ARIZONA

VALLEY GOLF CENTER

Avondale

HOT STIX GOLF

Scottsdale (five locations: Ariz., Calif., Fla., N.Y.)

GOLF STOP

Tucson

CALIFORNIA

CARLSBAD GOLF CENTER

Carlsbad

THE CLUB FIX

Irvine (six locations: Calif., Ariz., Fla., N.Y.)

URBAN GOLF

PERFORMANCE

Los Angeles

HAGGIN OAKS SUPER SHOP

Sacramento

STADIUM GOLF CENTER

San Diego

JOE KWOK GOLF

San Francisco

KEPLER'S GOLF

Walnut Creek

COLORADO

GOTT GOLF GREEN VALLEY

RANCH

Denver

D'LANCE GOLF

PERFORMANCE CENTER

Englewood

CONNECTICUT

PERFORMANCE

CLUBWORKS

Brookfield

DEMANE GOLF

Greenwich

CHRIS COTE'S GOLF SHOP

Portland

AULENTI FITTING STUDIO

Stamford

DOWNTOWN GOLF

Stamford

FLORIDA

THE GOLF GUYS

Bonita Springs (two locations)

PUTTER AROUND

Coconut Creek (two locations)

FELLINGER CUSTOM GOLF

Hobe Sound

THE GOLF MECHANIC

Lauderhill

PURE PERFORMANCE

GOLF LABS

Naples (five locations: Fla., Ga., Mass., Mich.)

GRAND CYPRESS ACADEMY

OF GOLF

Orlando

MARRIOTT GOLF ACADEMY

Orlando

PALM BEACH GOLF CENTER

Palm Beach (three locations)

THE VILLAGES

GOLF ACADEMY

The Villages

GEORGIA

ARNOLD BLUM GOLF

LEARNING CENTER AT

IDLE HOUR CLUB

Macon

USHER GOLF

Savannah

SEA ISLAND GOLF

PERFORMANCE CENTER

St. Simons Island

DANA GOLF

Warner Robins

THE GOLF DOCTOR AT

CHEROKEE GOLF CENTER

Woodstock

ILLINOIS

COUNTRY ACRES

CUSTOM GOLF

Mount Vernon

PINE MEADOW

Mundelein

MISTWOOD PERFORMANCE

CENTER

Romeoville

INDIANA

CORRECT2COMPETE

Zionsville

IOWA

GOLFUSA OF CORALVILLE

Coralville

NEW HAMPSHIRE

GOLF & SKI WAREHOUSE

Hudson (four locations: N.H., Maine)

KUSTOM CLUBS FITTING

CENTER

Manchester

KANSAS

GOLF M.D.

Lenexa

KENTUCKY

GOLF EXCHANGE

Florence (five locations: Ky., Ohio)

MAN O' WAR GOLF

LEARNING CENTER

Lexington

LOUISIANA

JAMES LEITZ GOLF

Slidell

MARYLAND

GOLF CARE CENTER

Bethesda

NIGHT HAWK GOLF CENTER

Gambrills

MASSACHUSETTS

JOE & LEIGH'S GOLF

PERFORMANCE CENTER

Easton

ACE OF CLUBS

Saugus

MICHIGAN

CARL'S GOLF LAND

Bloomfield Hills (two locations)

PLAYER'S CHOICE GOLF

Okemos

CLOR'S OUTPOST

Osseo

MILES OF GOLF

Ypsilanti (two locations: Mich., Ohio)

MINNESOTA

TOTALLY DRIVEN

Edina

2ND SWING GOLF

Minneapolis (two locations)

MISSOURI

ROBIN NIGRO

GOLF ACADEMY

Kansas City

NEW HAMPSHIRE

GOLF & SKI WAREHOUSE

Hudson (four locations: N.H., Maine)

KUSTOM CLUBS FITTING CENTER

Manchester

NEW JERSEY

PERFECT SWING GOLF

Lakewood

NEW YORK

BIG OAK DRIVING RANGE

East Rochester

TRU-FIT CUSTOM CLUBS

Latham

PETE'S GOLF

Mineola

TRUE SPEC GOLF

New York City

NORTH CAROLINA

TEE TO GREEN

Apex

DANA RADER GOLF SCHOOL

Charlotte

FIRST TEE GOLF

Goldsboro

THE CLUB SHOPPE

Murphy

OHIO

CONQUEST CUSTOM GOLF

Cincinnati

GRANVILLE GOLF LAND

Granville

WINDMILL GOLF CENTER

Macedonia

THE GOLF PIT

Maumee

MCGOLF CUSTOM CLUBS

Waverly

FW GOLF

Wickliffe

OKLAHOMA

BALL GOLF CENTER

Oklahoma City

OREGON

REDTAIL GOLF CENTER

Beaverton

PENNSYLVANIA

IZETT GOLF

Ardmore

SITTLER GOLF CENTER

Kutztown

RHODE ISLAND

SPARGO GOLF

Cranston

SOUTH CAROLINA

EAGLE ZONE

Greenville

VICTORY CUSTOM GOLF

Lake Wylie

LOWCOUNTRY CUSTOM GOLF

Mount Pleasant

STEVE DRESSER GOLF SCHOOL

Pawleys Island

TENNESSEE

FELIX CLUBWORKS

Collierville

TEXAS

COMPUGOLF CENTER

Carrollton

FIT 2 SCORE

Carrollton

LEONARD GOLF LINKS

Fort Worth

SWANSON GOLF CENTER

Houston

MK GOLF TECHNOLOGIES

San Antonio

GOLF PERFORMANCE CENTER

The Woodlands

UTAH

GOLF LAB

Salt Lake City

VIRGINIA

GOLF FITTING STUDIO

AT WESTFIELDS

Clifton

CHUCK WILL GOLF ACADEMY

Dulles

GOLDFDOM

McLean

HODSON GOLF

Richmond (two locations)

WASHINGTON

GREGG ROGERS' GOLF

PERFORMANCE CENTER

Bellevue

PUETZ GOLF

Seattle (four locations)

NATIONAL

NOTE: Only the specific locations listed under each national chain earned 100 Best recognition.

CLUB CHAMPION

Fla. (Orlando); Ga. (Sandy Springs); Ill. (Chicago, Deerfield, Willowbrook); Md. (Rockville); Mass. (Needham); Pa. (Bala Cynwyd); Texas (Houston, Plano)

COOL CLUBS

Ariz. (Scottsdale); Calif. (Foster City, Irvine); Fla. (Wellington); Ga. (Tucker); Ill. (Highland Park); N.Y. (New York Golf Center); Texas (Lewisville)

GOLF ETC.

Fla. (Lakeland); Ind. (Fort Wayne); Kan. (Wichita); N.C. (Cary, Monroe); S.C. (Hilton Head Island)

GOLF GALAXY

Calif. (Roseville); Iowa (West Des Moines); Mich. (Grand Rapids); Minn. (Bloomington, Plymouth); Neb. (Omaha); Nev. (Henderson, Las Vegas); N.J. (East Hanover);

N.C. (Charlotte); Pa. (Allentown, Berwyn, Pittsburgh); Tenn. (Brentwood); Va. (Glen Allen)

GOLF HEADQUARTERS

Ark. (Little Rock); Ky. (Louisville); Mont. (Billings); Nev. (Reno); N.M. (Albuquerque); Ohio (Youngstown); Texas (Lubbock, McAllen); Va. (Chesapeake)

GOLFSMITH

Calif. (Irvine, Palm Desert, Pleasanton, San Jose); Fla. (Boca Raton, Lutz, Sarasota); Ga. (Atlanta); Mo. (St. Louis); N.C. (Greensboro, Raleigh); Tenn. (Chattanooga); Texas (Austin, San Antonio, Spring); Va. (Fairfax); Wis. (Brookfield)

GOLFTEC

Colo. (Denver-DTC); Hawaii (Honolulu); Neb. (Omaha); Ohio (Beachwood, North Olmsted); Texas (Dallas, Houston)

PGA TOUR SUPERSTORE

Ariz. (Chandler, Scottsdale); Colo. (Greenwood Village); Ga. (Roswell); Ill. (Downers Grove, Schaumburg); N.J. (Paramus); S.C. (Myrtle Beach, North Myrtle Beach); Texas (Plano, two stores)

WORLDWIDE GOLF

Ariz. Van's (Sun City, Tucson); Calif. Roger Dunn (Fresno, Santa Ana); Fla. Edwin Watts (Miami-Doral, Orlando-Turkey Lake, Palm Beach); Ga. Edwin Watts (Atlanta); Hawaii Roger Dunn (Honolulu, Kahului, Pearl City); Kan. Edwin Watts (Overland Park); Utah Uinta (Orem, Salt Lake City, Sandy)



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The young players are “incredible ambassadors for us.”

The Up-and-Comers

How a little-known insurer came to back women's pro golf

Symetra is an insurance company you probably don't know. To help change that, it's sponsoring a professional golf tour for women you probably don't know, either. At least not yet.

The tour is similar to the Web.com circuit for aspiring PGA Tour players. It has 23 events throughout the United States, and its top-10 tournament money-earners are promoted to the LPGA Tour each year. They call it the “Road to the LPGA.”

The Bellevue, Wash., company also sponsors two of the tour's events—the Symetra Classic in Charlotte and the Symetra Tour Championship in Daytona Beach.

Formerly part of Safeco Insurance, Symetra won't reveal its budget for this. But sports-marketing experts estimate the naming rights would likely go for about \$1 million to twice that. To sponsor an individual tournament, a company generally pays an amount equal to the prize money—in this case, \$100,000 to \$200,000 per event. By contrast, sponsoring something like the Web.com Tour would likely cost \$10 million a year over 10 years, experts say.

Is this the best way for Symetra to spend its marketing dollars? CEO Tom Marra is confident it is. “I loved the idea from the start, and I haven't

looked back,” he says. In 2013, its second year as sponsor, the company renewed its commitment through 2017.

The LPGA tracks TV, print and online mentions of the Symetra Tour and sends Marra a quarterly report. It contends the tour generated a billion “media impressions” last year, worth more than \$10 million in advertising. Symetra also surveys the bankers, insurance agents and

financial advisers who sell its products. They say the sponsorship has had “a meaningful, positive impact” on brand awareness and sales, says Jim Pirak, a senior Symetra marketing executive.

Marra says heightened visibility is only part of the plan: “Our goal is to become a national player. We look at unique ways to use our brand to create not just recognition but relationships.”

To that end, the company

invites more than 200 of its top business partners (and prospective ones) to Symetra events each year. At its season-ending Florida tournament, guests arrive on a Tuesday and head to a party at the Daytona International Speedway, where they can zip around the track with a professional driver. The next morning, they attend a few business meetings before competing in the pro-am.

The professional golfers make the pro-ams a big hit for clients. “They're incredible ambassadors for us,” Pirak says. “The feedback we get from our guests is that [players] are really engaged in the discussion and want to talk about Symetra.”

Marra, former president of The Hartford Financial Services Group, is using sports to sell Symetra in other ways. The company sponsors J.J. Henry on the PGA Tour, supports a teacher-appreciation program involving NFL teams and hosted clients at the NCAA Final Four men's basketball tournament in 2014 and 2015.

Presented with a choice, many clients would rather attend an NFL or college basketball game than a women's golf event. “But once they experience how genuine and incredible these women are, and the overall experience they have, we get a lot of follow-up requests to be invited the next year,” Pirak says. The company asked for more pro-am spots this season—it will fill 80 foursomes—because demand has been so high.

Marra's introduction to the tour came in the late 1990s, when he and his family hosted young players competing in the Hartford tournament. “The players are just so humble, so affable, so appreciative,” Marra says. “That's the one word: appreciative. I get 30 or more handwritten notes from them every year, thanking us for our support.”

It seems Symetra isn't the only one working on relationship-building. —PETER FINCH

The name game

 The LPGA's “developmental tour,” founded in 1981, has helped launch the careers of many well-known players. They include Lorena Ochoa, Christina Kim, Cristie Kerr, Grace Park, Inbee Park and Karrie Webb. Over the years it has been known as the Tampa Bay Mini Tour and the SBC Futures Tour, among others. The last corporate sponsor before Symetra was Duramed, a drug company that has since been taken over.

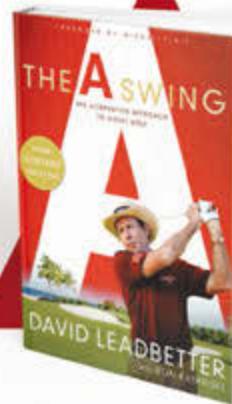


Therese Koelbaek graduated from the Symetra Tour to the LPGA in 2015.

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OMEGA
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Formal Affair

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YOU DON'T HAVE TO WEAR a dress watch when you play golf like Phil Mickelson, but it's nice to have one for formal occasions. I recommend you start with a simple, elegant face and pair it with a black strap. Choose quality over something trendy. It's not an insignificant investment, so chances are you'll have this watch for a long time. Here are nine from \$995 to \$26,000. —Marty Hackel

IWC
PORTOFINO
\$4,900



TIFFANY
ATLAS
\$2,500

Fieldwork shows that not all Smalls, Mediums and Larges are made equal.

Do You Have That in a Vanity Size?

Trying to find consistency in my clothes game

BY DAVID OWEN

My closet contains so many golf shirts that when I buy a new one I have trouble jamming it in—is there a tool for this task?—yet I repeatedly favor the same four or five. The reason can't be that I prefer a particular “style,” because most of my shirts look almost exactly alike (dark blue, stripes). Recently, I studied my closet scientifically and discovered that the shirts I like best are larger than the ones I like least, even though, according to their labels, they're all the same size.

My preference must be age-and-weight-related; the trend among tour players and other young people has been toward slimmer, tighter, shorter. Those guys will come around as they transition to the Champions Tour, I predict, but even for youthful beanpoles the size on a shirt label is an approximation. I took a tape measure to all my golf shirts, which were made by many manufacturers, and discovered lots of variation: a four-inch difference between longest and shortest, when measured from chin to hem, and a five-inch range in circumference at the armpit. And I found the same thing at the mall, although my analysis there was constrained by my reluctance to spread unpurchased merchandise on the floor.

And then I measured pants. Like many men, I am a reluctant, unimaginative clothes shopper. The last time I tried on a pair of pants before buying it was almost 25 years ago, when I'd just returned from golf school and



wanted to study my swing in front of floor-to-ceiling mirrors. As a result, my closet is shifted heavily toward the Levi's-and-Dockers end of the spectrum, and when I find a pair I don't hate I wear it until my wife gives me a look that's the opposite of the look wives give husbands in Cialis commercials. I have a dozen pairs of all-cotton khakis of various vintages, and none of them, it turns out, are exactly the size I thought they were. The inseams are all shorter than stated on the labels, by between half an inch and an inch and a half, and the waists are larger—in all cases by at least two inches, and in one case by almost three. And that's not because I've stretched them by cramming myself into them: I measured brand-new pairs, too.

I spoke with Matthew Thomas, who is the golf-apparel buyer at Zappos, an online store that has an almost cult-like commit-

ment to customer satisfaction (no-questions-asked returns, free shipping both ways, no problem ordering multiple sizes and sending back rejects). Thomas is 33 years old, and his golf handicap is 14. He said (gently) that some pants brands are aimed at a certain demographic—that larger American gentleman—and therefore offer a “more robust fit” and even engage in what's known as “vanity sizing.” And thank goodness for that. But waistband generosity, according to my fieldwork, isn't limited to old-guy clothes. I measured three pairs of cutting-edge golf pants made of the modern, expensive version of polyester. The inseams on all three were exactly as stated, but the waists were more than two inches oversize. Again, I'm not complaining. But Thomas said that the younger guys in his office tend to wear “nongolf

brands” when they play golf, because they prefer a snugger fit.

As men age, sizing becomes at least as much a matter of philosophy as of geometry. My grandfather pulled his pants several inches above his navel and used his actual waist as a ledge to hang them from; I'm in the other camp, since what I think of as my waist is probably technically my hips. Thomas said that fashions in golf lag several years behind fashions in other sports, and that that's because of guys like me. “In a few years,” he said, “you're going to see more tapered fits out there, but it still won't be anything crazy, because the general population of golfers is older and more conservative.” I asked him which sport comes closest to the other fashion extreme. “Skate,” he said.

I paused—oldly, I guess. “Skateboards,” he continued. “Not figure skating.”

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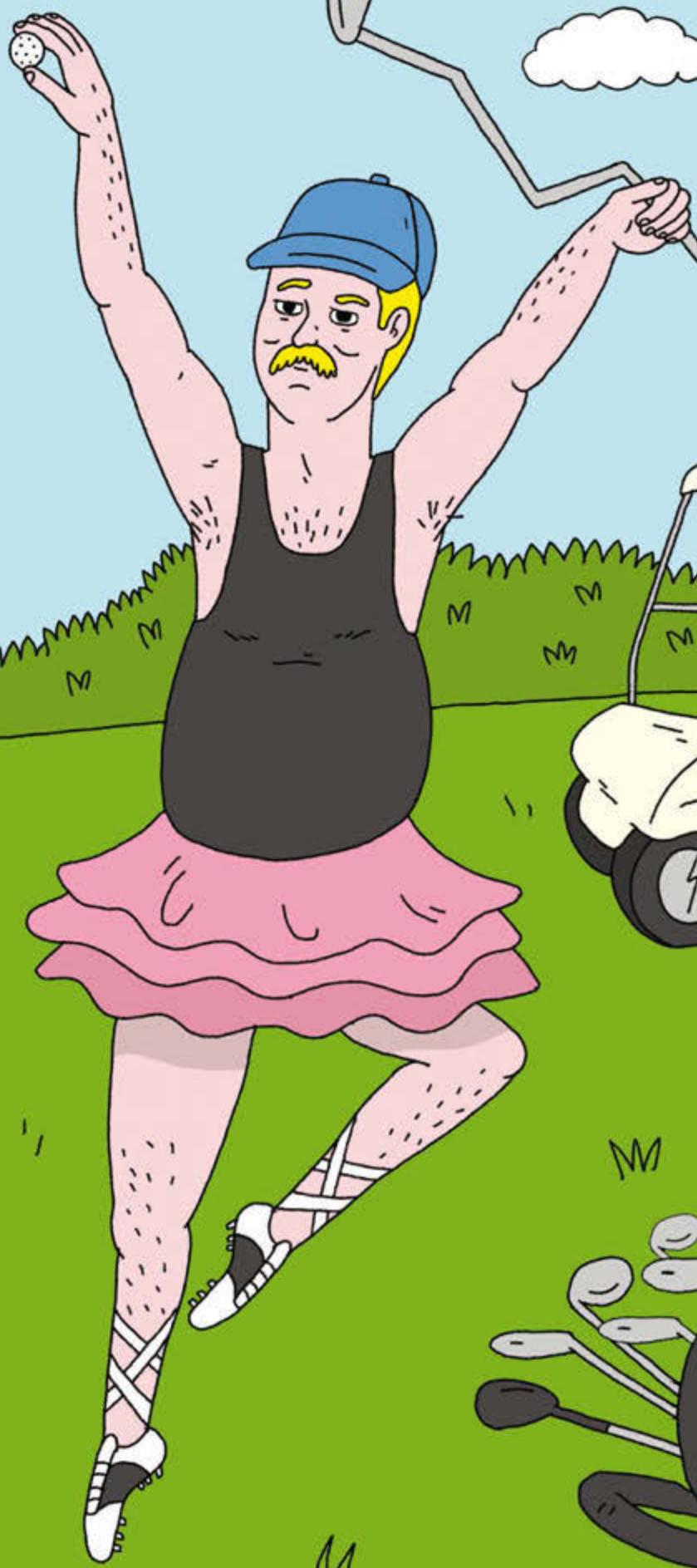


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HOW
TO

STINK IT UP *Gracefully*

& 29 OTHER TIPS

FOR HAVING THE MOST FUN YOU CAN HAVE

PLAYING GOLF / BY GUY YOCOM

The hardest questions in golf are the ones that never seem to get asked. Take that cigar-chomping first-tee starter with a wad of cash in his pocket. You're wondering, *Is he as up for a bribe as he looks? If so, how do I solicit a magic-carpet ride to the first tee?* Another one: When your opponent hits a hosel rocket into the trees, are you obligated to express sympathy, or can you obey your first instinct

and just laugh? How do you ask that LPGA Tour player out on a date, anyway? ► No guts, no glory. Here are 30 issues you might have pondered but haven't quite had the temerity to query your friends about. You won't find the advice we've assembled here in any golf etiquette guide, but it'll make you more fun to play and hang with. And the starter you greased won't be offended, either. ► ► ►

1

Stinking it up gracefully

Inside, you're burning with frustration, despair and self-loathing. On the outside—the only side that matters in a social setting—your friends should see a person blessed with inhuman patience, dogged persistence and self-deprecating humor.

3

HAVING A LITTLE SWAGGER LIKE ARNIE IN HIS PRIME

When you hit it close or jar a long putt, imagine throngs of people cheering wildly. Tip your cap to these invisible fans. Bow your head humbly. Do not, however, light a cigarette unless you smoke. And only hitch your pants if your waist size is 36 or smaller.



4

DEALING WITH THE RANGER WHEN HE TELLS YOU TO PICK UP THE PACE

► You're dying to explain there's a beginner in your foursome, you've just looked for three lost balls, and the group in front is slow. But just thank him, nod, and play faster.

5

TELLING YOUR OPPONENT HIS PUTT'S NOT GOOD

► One day you'll have an opponent look at his downhill, breaking two-footer for par and ask, "Is the rest of that good?" Your answer, with a smile: "It ain't bad. That was a beautiful lag."

6

SWARING AFTER HITTING A BAD SHOT

► Color the air blue without actually swearing. Incorporate the words "suck," "idiot," "garbage," "stink" and "moron." Don't yell profanities. Hiss them. Tommy Bolt, the best swearer ever, never screamed.

2

RATTLING YOUR OPPONENT (LIKE SEVE DID)

Stand between him and his golf bag so he has to walk around you to get to it. Cough, sniffle and sneeze during his swing, then blame it on allergies. Insinuate yourself into every rules situation involving his ball. Make him move his ball marker on the greens, even when it isn't exactly on your line. Finally, chip in a lot.



8

HAVING THE MOST FUN IN YOUR GROUP

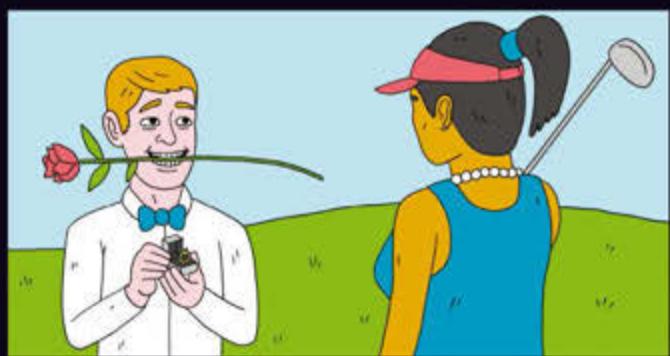
Make the round enjoyable for your friends, and the karma will boomerang. Ask them if they want to walk or ride. If it's ride, ask if they want to drive or ride shotgun. Show up with a joke. Be quick with praise and sympathy, slow to complain. Help your buddies. Rake their bunkers, offer yardages, bring over an extra club. They'll treat you the same, and how fun is that?

7

DATING AN LPGA TOUR PLAYER

How do you, a stranger, pull this off without winding up on the receiving end of a restraining order? One way is to write a letter requesting her accompaniment to your prom—it worked for two young fellas who

sought respective get-togethers with Lexi Thompson and Belen Mozo. Another way is to be independently wealthy enough to become a regular on the LPGA pro-am circuit. Make trusted friends around the LPGA Tour and the player's hometown. When you do ask, suggest a multiple-couple group outing at a public venue—a concert, or maybe a bustling restaurant. Good luck, and may Cupid's arrows find their mark.



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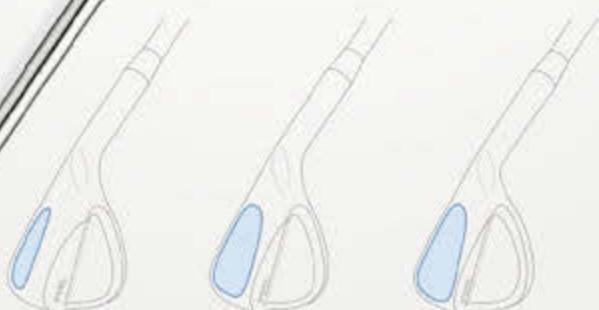


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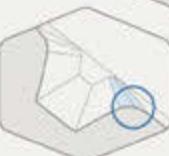
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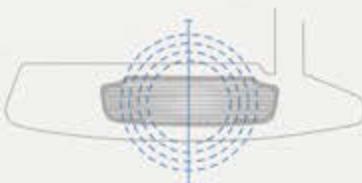


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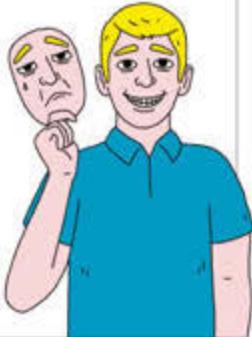
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9

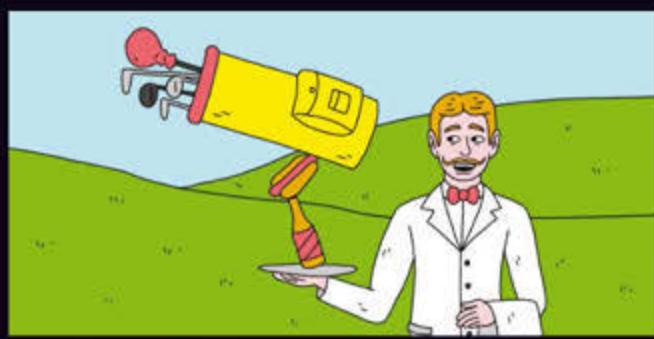
**FEIGNING
SADNESS
WHEN YOUR
OPPONENT
HITS A
BAD SHOT**

Never hint that you actually enjoyed watching him skitter one into the gunch, though enjoy it you surely did. Never feign sympathy, either—it indicates you don't care who wins, a transparently phony attitude if ever there was one. Best to react like a court-room judge: attentive, impartial and nonplussed.

**10**

Drink the beer down a third of the way before you leave the window. With the hot dog, go very light on the ketchup or mustard, especially if you're wearing a white shirt. If you can consume the hot dog in three large bites, it'll be done and out of your way before you reach the 150-yard marker.

TOTING A BEER, HOT DOG AND YOUR GOLF BAG

**11**

TELLING YOUR BUDDY TO STOP HELPING YOU

► When swing advice from this wannabe Butch Harmon doesn't stop, nod attentively, then hand him your 3-iron, toss a ball into a cuppy lie and say: "Show me." If he happens to hit that shot 220 yards with a high draw, give up. He might be onto something.

12

GETTING GOOD BOUNCES

► Call us superstitious, but if you make a habit of whining at the golf gods for bad bounces, the deities will conduct a closed-door meeting and conspire to make things worse. If you accept the occasional rotten bounce as the golf gods just doing their job, they'll be more likely to open the gates of heaven at the right time, and give you a good bounce when you need it.

13

HITTING A SHOT YOU HAVE NO RIGHT HITTING

► Have quick retorts ready for when you fail. "I didn't win the Powerball last night, so I just had to give that shot a go." They say the best-looking girls don't get offers because nobody dares ask them out. Same rule applies here: You'll never get at that tucked flagstick if you aim for the fat of the green.

14

Talking trash to your buddies

Address your pal John as if he were a child. Condescend: "Fellas, don't you think Johnnycakes is improving?" Assign reputations they don't yet have: "The staff might think you're a lousy tipper, but I'll say this: Your swing is looking good."

15

BUYING A USED CLUB ON EBAY

► The "buy it now" button on eBay can be a portal to used-club heaven or junk-club hell. A list of musts as you proceed through a listing: sharp photos (the more the better), all the specs (shaft flex and length, loft and lie), reasonable shipping, decent seller feedback and a hassle-free return policy. The idea is to remove any possibility of surprise when the club arrives.

**16**

PLAYING WELL WHEN YOU'RE HUNGOVER

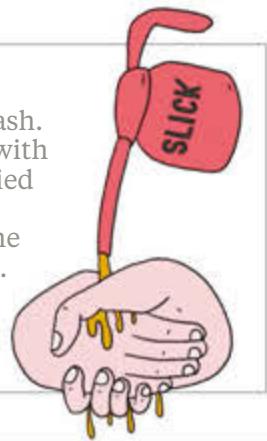
You brought this on yourself, so don't even think of complaining. Chug water like a parched horse. Take one more ibuprofen than usual. Choke down a burger if you can find one: Hall of Famer Tom Weiskopf used to say the combination of bread and grease does a body good.



18

GREASING THE STARTER

Slip him stuff rather than cash. A sleeve of premium balls, with an innocuous, "Have you tried these?" Or a couple of ball markers from your trip to the U.S. Open. He'll understand. Don't make a habit of it—just enough to make him remember you.



22

HITTING A GOOD DRIVE WITHOUT WARMING UP

► Make a couple of practice swings with drowsy slowness, then tee your ball a shade higher than usual. Swing at 75 percent of your power, concentrating only on making the center of the clubface meet the ball. Regardless of where the shot goes, keep in mind that you aren't warmed up for your second shot, either: Stretch everything out as you walk to your ball.

23

Serve pimento-cheese sandwiches. (Recipes are all over the Internet.) During commercials, challenge your guests to say, "Hello, friends" in the manner of Jim Nantz. Conduct an eagle pool—\$10 to enter, players chosen by blind draw. Have two TV rooms: one for people who yack through the telecast, the other for serious viewers.

7 HUMILIATING YOUR BOSS (AND STILL GETTING A RAISE)

If you sense your boss expects you to lose on purpose, find another job. If you feel he'll tolerate your winning but might take it personally, start updating your résumé. If you sense he wants your best effort because it demonstrates moxy and honesty, oblige. Then wrap him in gold, for he is a rare and beautiful creature.

19

WINNING A BET ON THE FIRST TEE

► Most golf is four-ball match play, so come to the first tee knowing who the best player is, and snag him as your partner. Follow that quickly with the bet you want to make. If you're answering to the other team's proposition, you're already on the defensive. Also, be mindful of the serious edge to be had on side bets—the "junk." If you and your partner are better ball-strikers than your foes, propose larger payoffs for birdies and greenies.

20

KEEPING UP WITH THE BIG HITTERS

► After you've squeezed every morsel of distance you can by normal means—practice, lessons and tweaking your equipment—there's one trick left. That's to swing the club faster and a little more recklessly than you're comfortable doing. Golf is a sport in which physicality and some aggression can pay off.

21

Surviving a nightmare round

When you've hit a gazillion bad shots and nothing is working, reset. If you're a teetotaler, summon the beverage cart. If you're not a music person, kick on the tunes. Ask your buddy if you can try his driver. Go left-hand-low. Play a hole barefoot. Anything to get you to the parking lot with a smile.

THROWING A KILLER MASTERS PARTY



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amenities include a 6,500 square-foot clubhouse and a 25-acre practice facility. After your round, a complimentary shuttle service will take you back to the Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort Hotel, where you can enjoy the full-service spa, indoor and

outdoor pools and hot tubs, fine and casual dining, exciting shows, headliner entertainment, boxing events and concerts. For reservations and more information, go to cdacasino.com/golf, or call 800-523-2464.

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boat takes you to the course, where your complimentary forecaddie meets you at the dock. After a gratis sports massage at the practice tee, you'll move on to the 6,800-yard, par-71 picturesque lakefront layout for a golf experience like no other. Learn more at cdaresort.com, or call 855-421-0535.

24

CONSOLING YOUR PARTNER WHEN HE'S PLAYING LIKE A DOG

Ever see Ryder Cup partners roll their eyes at each other or give the silent treatment? Of course not, except for Tiger and Phil in 2004. The lesson: Never admonish, scold or cold-shoulder your partner. When he's hitting it wild, a squeeze on the shoulder or pat on the butt might get him striping it again.

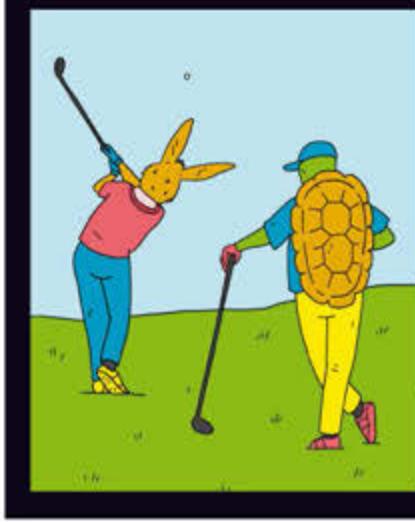


25

TELLING A GOLF TALE THAT'S ACTUALLY INTERESTING

► Here's the outline of a first-person golf story. Read and learn. **Stan got bit by a rattlesnake during our golf trip in Arizona. It was on the fourth hole at Screaming Cactus Country Club. He snaps one into the desert and goes after it. Doesn't even scream. He just runs back to the fairway, takes a drop and hits. The bites are pinholes. One of the snake's broken fangs is sticking out of one of them. But Stan wants to finish the hole. Another guy in our foursome calls 911. The paramedics meet us at the clubhouse—after we finish the round. Stan didn't play any more that trip, but he's fine. Still has the fang and keeps it in his bag for good luck.**

See what we did? The story was told backward, punch line first, and kept in the present tense, as though it's happening now. And blessedly, it was over in less than two minutes.



26

PLAYING 18 IN UNDER 3 HOURS

You're going to need an open course, a good set of lungs and people as up for this as you are. Tee to green, ditch the range finder, don't take practice swings, and remember that when you're not hitting, you should be walking. On the greens, if you crouch to read a putt, you're too slow. Don't mark your ball, and be generous with concessions.

27

PRACTICING CHIP SHOTS WITHOUT HURTING ANY BYSTANDERS

► You know those "no chipping" signs by the practice green? How they were allegedly put there to protect the turf? The course operators are playing you. They want to prevent 16-handicappers from trying Phil Mickelson's greenside flop shot and blading one into the shin of the guy practicing four-footers. Use common sense. Never try to carry the ball more than two feet or aim at a target farther than 10 feet away. And for all that's holy, don't try to be like Phil and see if you can hit one left-handed.

28

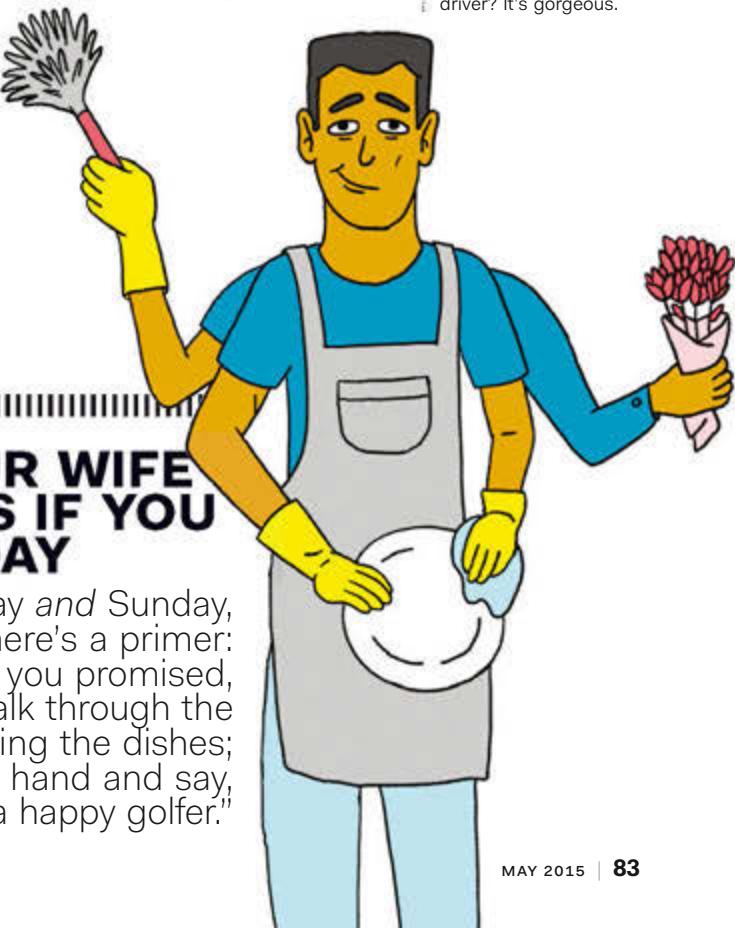
Winning your office pool

Check out recent form and how the player has fared at a venue. Near home, he'll have extra fans—and extra incentive. Nothing beats being comfortable.

29

BREAKING THE ICE WHEN YOU'RE A SINGLE JOINING A THREESOME

► Start with: "You guys look easy—want to play for a hundred each?" Just kidding. Be polite and deferential, like a party guest. Keep the conversation light, at least at first. Three keepers: Will Tiger play in the Masters? Ever been to one? When did you get that new driver? It's gorgeous.



30

GETTING YOUR WIFE TO CARE LESS IF YOU PLAY SATURDAY

- 1 Arrive home 30 minutes earlier than you promised, and never be late;
- 2 When you walk through the door, head to the kitchen and start doing the dishes;
- 3 Press the \$40 you won into her hand and say, "I won this because you make me a happy golfer."

HIT A REAL



BY RICKIE FOWLER
YOU CAN PLAY **LEFT TO RIGHT**
AND STILL BOMB IT

Photographs by Walter Iooss Jr.

T

here's not a player on tour who can't work the ball both ways. Each week we face at least a few holes where there's pretty much no option but to curve your tee shot right or left. Sure, you can lay up short of most severe doglegs, but play conservative all the time out here, and you get dusted. Thing is, not all tour players shape it both ways properly. And I used to be

FADE



one of them. ► For many years, my left-to-right tee ball was basically a big slice. I'd wipe the clubface across the ball, and my timing had to be really on to get a predictable result. Then last May, Butch [Harmon] taught me to hit a real fade. Transformed my game. Now I hit my little slider all the time, even when the design of the hole doesn't demand it. ► Unlike a slice, where the ball starts far left of your target and then dramatically curves back, a real fade

actually flies pretty straight before drifting to the right at the end. The ball holds its line into a strong wind, and really tumbles and gets out there when it hits the fairway—benefits that people always associate with the draw. ► If you're a right-handed weekend player, chances are you're used to seeing a left-to-right shot shape with your driver. That doesn't have to change. But I can show you a way to do it with more power and consistency: the real fade. —**WITH MAX ADLER**



SOURCE: SHOTLINK



1 TEE IT LOWER, AIM LEFT

► To hit the fade, I tee it low. I want the ball's equator level with the top edge of the driver, or even a little lower is OK. That brings your starting lines in. By that

I mean, when it's teed high there's so much space for the clubhead to come at the ball from any direction, and you hit bigger misses. I tee it high only when I want to hit a high draw or big straight ball, like on a wide-open par 5. Just sit back and let it go. But

for the fade, the lower tee height helps me to get my chest "on top of the ball" at impact with no hang-back. The other thing I do is pick a spot about 10 feet in front of my ball—a leaf or piece of mud—that's in line with the left edge of the fairway. I aim the clubface at that spot and then set

my body parallel to the target line, as if the left edge of the fairway were the center stripe. Then I think about standing tall with my chin off my neck, my whole body loose and athletic. I take my normal grip, nice and relaxed in my fingers. Just before

starting the club back, I let the clubface peek open just a hair to the right.

2 KEEP TABS ON YOUR RHYTHM

► The feeling of the takeaway is the same as when I'm trying to hit a nor-

mal straight ball. My first move is to rotate my left arm so the toe of the clubface pops open. Then I just slowly turn my shoulders to complete the back-swing. You never want to get quick with the takeaway, because that will disrupt the tempo

PUMA
shirt, \$90
pants, \$80
hat, \$28
shoes, \$190
TITLEIST
glove, \$24

'BUTCH TAUGHT
ME TO HIT
A REAL FADE.
TRANSFORMED
MY GAME.'



of the whole swing. Then at the top, my only thought is *Good rhythm*. Back when I would hit the slice for my left-to-right shot, I could get too quick here. My spine would tilt back, my body would stop turning, and I'd throw my hands at the ball. I'd hold the face open to make sure the ball didn't

snap left, and the sound of the ball peeling right off the face never sounded solid. The way you want to feel at the top is that you have all the time in the world. If at this moment someone shouted directions to me to hit either a fade or a draw, I could do it.

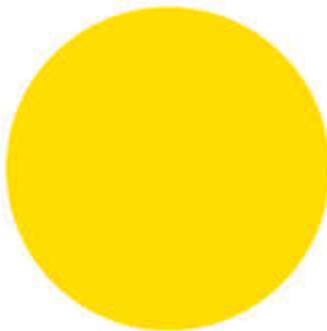
**3
MAKE IT
AN ALL-BODY
SWING**

► The death move on the downswing is starting with your hands and coming over the top. People do this because they think that to produce a fade, the club's path has to

cut across the ball from out to in, but that's just a slice. The funny thing about a real fade is that it feels almost exactly like you're hitting a draw. You're attacking the ball from the inside and feeling all your big muscles—legs, upper body, arms—moving together

toward the target. Remember I said I wanted to feel my chest on top of the ball? This is that moment. For a draw, the only difference is I would add extra release with my hands at the bottom of the swing, really rolling the clubface over. This is what makes a real fade so reliable: You don't do

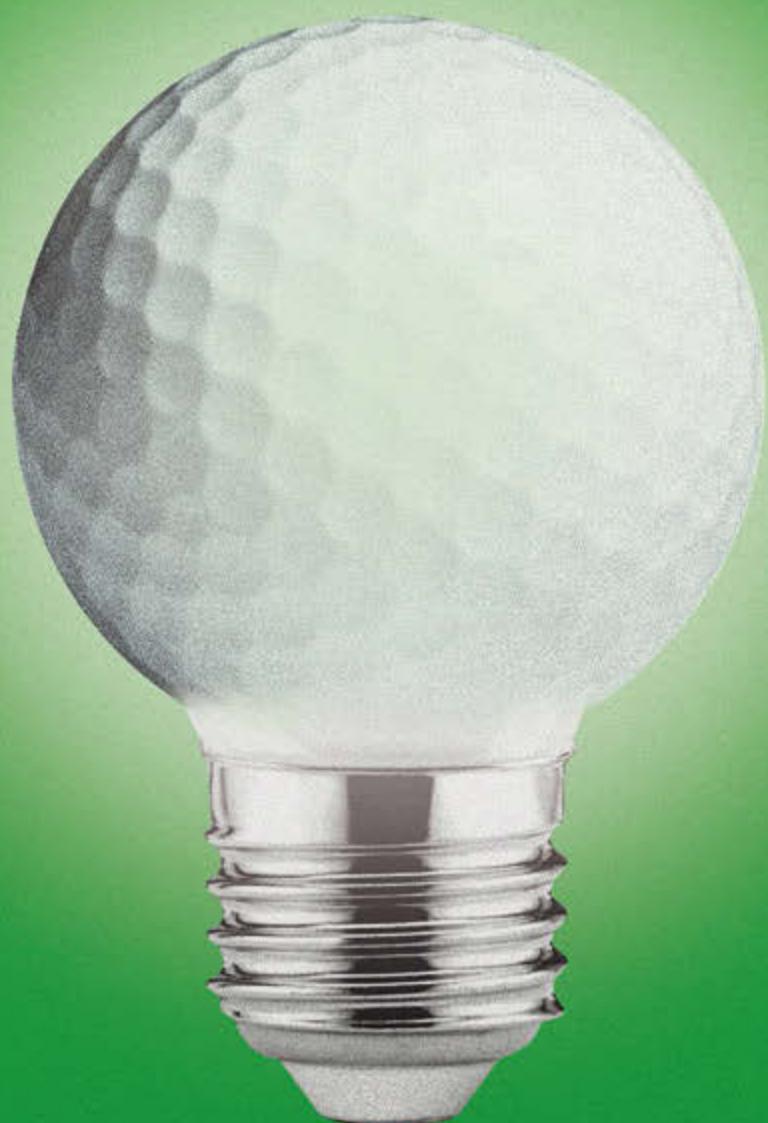
anything with your hands; it's just a pure all-body swing. In the end, setting your stance toward the left edge of the fairway and opening the clubface slightly at address are the two most important adjustments you need to make to hit the fade. Got it?



Could've Thought of That!

How Kickstarter can turn a stupid golf idea into millions

BY LUKE KERR-DINEEN





Chloé Philippou is a quirky 22-year-old with cute Clubmaster glasses and a posh English accent. She works at an auto body shop, but her true passion is making movies. The problem is, they cost money. Her phone isn't filled with deep-pocketed producers, banks won't read screenplays, and she doesn't want to ask her mum and dad.

So Philippou finds cash on Kickstarter.com. To make "Crazy Golf," a horror movie she credits as one of her early breakthroughs, she asked for £2,000 and raised £3,049. "I wanted a kick-ass female underdog main character and loads of blood," she says. "I wanted a film that would make people laugh and feel disgusted at the same time."

It all starts rather nicely: A young, attractive couple goes on a date to a miniature golf course. They flirt and nervously laugh at one another's jokes, but there's a voodoo-induced snag after the boyfriend realizes he has forgotten his wallet. Roxy, the "kick-ass" female lead,

is unconcerned and pays the green fees. But the boyfriend's sense of emasculation compounds when she ignores his advice, starts draining long putts and sends friendly taunts in his direction. He snaps. He lunges at her. But Roxy downsm him with her putter before implanting it squarely into his skull. When she's done, she smiles and calmly continues putting.

"I want to inspire other girls and women to direct films," Philippou says. "Did you know only 9 percent of the top 250 Hollywood films in 2012 were directed by women?"

5 KICKSTARTER HOLES-IN-ONE



Potato Salad

A guy asked for \$10 to make some potato salad and raised more than \$55,000.

The Coolest Cooler

The first campaign of this combination blender/speaker/phone-charger/cooler was a dud. Then it relaunched,

asking for \$50,000, and landed more than \$13 million.

Exploding Kittens

This card game pits self-destructing kittens against goats and laser beams. It asked for \$10,000 and raised nearly \$9 million.

Da Sweet Blood

of Jesus Filmmaker Spike Lee helped legitimize Kickstarter

when he raised \$1.4 million for this thriller.

PowerUp 3.0

This lightweight motor can attach to any homemade paper airplane, which users can then control via a phone app. The makers asked for \$50,000 but received more than \$1.2 million.

—LKD

Kickstarter began, in theory, in 2001, when Perry Chen wanted to host a concert in New Orleans but didn't have the money. He asked friends online if they would be willing to pitch in a few bucks to make it happen, and the answer was yes. The idea stuck with him. Eight years and a move to Brooklyn later, Chen had joined Yancey Strickler and Charles Adler to turn his idea into a business. In 2009, Kickstarter.com officially launched. As did a new way of monetizing interest. Instead of trying to reap profits later on, creators could go to their future customers in advance.

How Kickstarter works is fairly simple: An inventor or artist creates a page on the website, specifies an amount of money needed to make the project a reality, and then sets a deadline to raise the funds. People browse ideas and pledge to ones they like. Backers receive no equity in return, but gifts are often used as incentives. For "Crazy Golf," donors who pledged £10 got a DVD, £100 earned the chance to be an extra, and £400 translated into an executive-producer credit. If a project doesn't raise its stated goal by the deadline, no money changes hands.

With more than \$1.5 billion raised from roughly eight million backers, Kickstarter has proved a tool for entrepreneurs and a catalyst for viral sensations.

Zack (Danger) Brown, a 31-year-old computer programmer and part-time com-

edy writer, raised more than \$55,000 when he asked for \$10 to buy the ingredients to make potato salad. The inventors of the Coolest Cooler—a cooler that's also a blender, speaker and phone-charger—asked for \$50,000 and raised more than \$13 million. In such cases, the excess lines the pockets of the happy creators.

The TV show "South Park" poked fun at the phenomenon in its most recent season when its cast of characters attempted to get rich by launching a Kickstarter page pledging to do nothing. "Remember our company plan," says Cartman, the lead instigator. "Start Up, Cash In, Sell Out, Bro Down."

"It's so easy to paint Kickstarter as a place where you can get rich for something stupid," says Rick Gehman, a 26-year-old entrepreneur from Philadelphia, "but it's actually really difficult."

Gehman co-founded the J-Flex putter, which has an elastic face insert he says reduces the dispersion on mis-hits. The J-Flex raised just \$6,050 of its \$20,000 goal. The flukiness of timing a pitch at the right moment in the cybersphere is part of the game, Gehman says: "Take the Coolest Cooler. Eight months earlier they launched a Kickstarter campaign for the same exact product, and it didn't reach its goal." (Lucky for them.)

About 40 percent of all projects raise their financial

goal. (Kickstarter receives a 5 percent cut of these successful campaigns and 3-5 percent payment-processing fees but gets nothing from the failures.) One reason for the widespread success is repeat backers. Of those eight million who have pledged money on Kickstarter, nearly 2.5 million have supported two or more projects, and more than 250,000 have backed 10 or more.

"It's a community of open-minded people who share the same values," says John Dimatos, lead for tech and design partnerships at Kickstarter. "There's a real democratic aspect to all this."

What if someone puts forward an idea, successfully funds it, then skips town with the dough? Dimatos says that's one of the reasons Kickstarter requires a verified name and email address. It also leaves every project page—successfully funded or otherwise—on the site indefinitely. But sometimes there's no avoiding it. "We try to make clear there are no guarantees," he says. "Unfortunately, it happens occasionally. That's life."

And what about people simply trying to become viral celebrities? Is Kickstarter worried they're devaluing the rest of the community? "Not at all. We absolutely love it," Dimatos says. "You can have a tiny, obscure, weird company from Wichita living alongside big business. That's so cool. That's the Internet."

Steve Fox, 59, is from San Francisco. After a long career in publishing, he wanted to do something new. In 2013, he

launched a \$50,000 Kickstarter campaign to help fund an indoor miniature golf course and restaurant with artistic sensibilities. "Urban Putt," he'd call it. The idea germinated when he used to host an annual party where friends brought themed mini-golf holes. Fox and a few friends designed The Bernie Madoff Hole, where a ball enters a hole, and out pops a ball that's one-twentieth its size. Fox had secured a location, but he needed additional money to build the course.

"I had this naive idea that people would be rushing to put money into it, but it was really hard work," Fox says. "After 10 days we didn't look like we were going to make it, so I started reaching out to everyone I knew."

Fox couldn't stop looking at his phone. When the green bar representing pledges finally reached its terminus, he let out a whoop and popped a bottle of champagne for his family and business associates. Today, Urban Putt gets anywhere from 300 to 400 people through its doors to play mini-golf on the average weekend night.

Compared to tech and art projects, the golf element of Kickstarter is still relatively small—just 258 golf-specific projects have launched since 2010—but there have been notable successes.

GolfBoard, the golf cart/

skateboard hybrid that won Best New Product at the 2014 PGA Merchandise Show, raised more than \$105,000 and is the highest-funded golf project to date. BombTech Golf already had the infrastructure to make and sell golf equipment but turned to Kickstarter to raise \$14,000 to launch the 9-degree version of its pre-existing Grenade driver. "Mulligan," a feature-length film about two friends hunting for mob money buried on a golf course, might have raised less than \$12,000.

but it helped contribute to the rise of Kaitlin Doubleday, who today plays Rhonda Lyon in the FOX series "Empire."

"There's nothing like Kickstarter," says Richard Stamper, a man who has worked at Callaway, Srixon and SkyGolf. "You get access to eight million early adopters who want to support creative ideas."

Stamper is the CEO of DV8 Sports, which markets a collapsible set of golf clubs that fits in a backpack as a solution for city folk tired of lugging clubs on a subway. Last July, DV8 asked for \$55,000 but raised more than \$85,000. The company is preparing to launch another campaign for its upcoming junior product.

In Kickstarter, Stamper finds himself part of a varied ecosystem of ideas. He's coexisting in a universe alongside \$50,000 potato salads, multimillion-dollar blenders and strange golf horror movies. But he's reassured by the knowledge that people are getting what they actually want. 

WHAT IF SOMEONE PUTS FORWARD AN IDEA, SUCCESSFULLY FUNDS IT, THEN SKIPS TOWN WITH THE DOUGH?

HOW TO HIT A PERFECT PITCH



Have a cool golf idea? Before you turn your camera on yourself and start blathering why people should give you money, know that the best Kickstarter pitches are typically highly researched and carefully crafted. Backers like to fund

projects they think are going to succeed, so enlist your family and golf buddies to give your project early momentum. The magic number is 20: Projects that get to 20 percent of their goal end up being fully funded 80 percent of the time. Once you're there, attract outsiders by offering incentives.

Even if you can't offer anything material, you can meet with your biggest backers and credit them publicly. Most important, show your personality. Kickstarter supporters like investing in people's dreams, so show your face, tell your story, and make your pitch personal. —LKD



“We’re Probably A Little

► Most of us enjoy a small wager when we play. Even the USGA is OK with that. But for some golfers, it doesn’t start to get interesting until big, big, **BIG MONEY** is at stake. By Michael Kaplan

Sick”



IF

YOU'RE GOING TO PLAY GOLF

with Eddie and his group, you'll need lots of money and some serious cajones. Though many of us like to have a little something riding on a match—maybe a round of drinks in the clubhouse or a \$10 nassau to keep things interesting—for Eddie's crew, gambling is something else altogether. Playing at a top country club in Southern California, guys who make up this loose-knit network of 20 or so serious amateur golfers routinely risk as much as \$10,000 per man over 18 holes. When a professional athlete or high-roller from Vegas slips into town, wagers can slide into the \$40,000-per-round range. As one of the gang puts it over a clubhouse breakfast: "We're probably a little sick. But we're a different breed of people. We like to have cake in the game."

Roughly 80 percent of male golfers 18 and up gamble when they play, according to a 2013 Golf Digest survey. It's both pervasive and, in most cases, relatively benign, says Lia Nower, professor and director of the Center for Gambling Studies at Rutgers University. "For 99 percent of the people, it's a way to spice up their game. I speculate that because it's an individual sport and you gamble on your own performance, it will make you play better. It can be motivating."

Generally the stakes are small. In a research paper published in 2001 by the scholarly journal International Gambling Studies, only 5 percent of golf gamblers reported risking \$200 or more per round. (A separate study by Starwood Hotels & Resorts found that 87 percent of CEOs gamble at golf, and they wager an average of \$589 per outing.) Even the United States Golf Association "does not object to informal gambling or wagering among individual golfers or teams of golfers when the players in general know each other," according to the USGA's Rules of Amateur Status.

The USGA goes on to say that when gambling, the stakes must not be "generally considered excessive." Eddie and his regular crew fail that test. Partly for that

reason, but mainly because they have day jobs and they don't want to attract hustlers or the IRS, Eddie and friends have insisted on using pseudonyms.

Besides, they already draw enough negative attention at their club. "People here look at us like we're derelicts," says James, a buddy of Eddie's. "We're the unwashed and, sometimes, the unwanted. But I wouldn't have it any other way. Country clubs are supposed to be reserved and cultured. That's bull----. My idea of a club is four guys going out onto the golf course for four hours and battling over \$100 bills."

The club where they play most often, which Golf Digest agreed not to name, declined to comment on Eddie and his friends.

You want enough money at stake so that when you do lose, you feel it.

A \$10,000 SWING IN ONE SHOT

Riding out to the first tee, Eddie explains that he does not play golf to relax. He thrives on the pressure that comes with high-stakes betting and every stroke counting. The founder of a successful company and in his early 50s, Eddie says he likes to test his skill, his mettle, his ability to keep from unraveling under big-money pressure. "I've had countless situations with 10-footers on the 18th where sinking it means the difference between winning \$5,000 and losing \$5,000," he says. "That's a \$10,000 swing in just one shot! People on the practice green fantasize about putting for a U.S. Open win. We have situations like that all the time. The pressure is on, and something serious is at stake."

Eddie and his golf cronies are all wealthy guys: doctors, CPAs, attorneys and entrepreneurs. They travel extensively, visiting courses such as Shadow Creek, Pebble Beach, Pinehurst, Oakmont and a club in the California desert. At that club, "there's always action," Eddie practically purrs. (The club in the desert had no comment. The other clubs and courses did not respond to our request for a comment.) The players gamble

among themselves, take trips specifically to wager with others, and, five or six times per year, participate in gamblers' golf tournaments. Entry fees are around \$7,500, with the money distributed to various winners.

"If you play really well, you might be able to win \$20,000 from the pool of cash," Eddie says. "But more than that's at stake in the wagering that gets done on the course."

Today's proceedings in Southern California are a bit tame—at least for this crowd. The group is 16 players, and a complex skein of nassaus, automatic presses, team bets, low-score wagers and birdie bonuses promises to provide the necessary pressure. There is also a penalty for shooting above your handicap: \$25 per stroke, paid to each participant, so it's \$375 if there are 15 other players. This provides one more way to gamble and serves as a preventive measure against sandbagging in future rounds.

To juice things up a bit, Eddie suggests that his foursome engage in bridge bets. These are wagers in which two players commit to making a certain combined score for a particular hole. The payoff is based on how many strokes above or below that number they wind up with. On the first two holes, it does not work out so well for Eddie and his partner, Phil, a dour, profanity-spewing executive with a cigar clamped between his teeth. Their opponents want to do it for \$800 on the third, but Phil wants to bet only \$200. Without hesitating Eddie says, "I'll take the \$600."

The hole is a par 4, and Eddie's opponents wager on making a combined score of 8 (they are both close to scratch golfers). The first guy's drive takes a lucky bounce off a bunker, and after a good approach, he has a putt for birdie. Eddie flubs his shot but doesn't really care. All his attention is on his opponents making bogey or worse. One guy makes birdie, the other makes a par, and Eddie has dropped a quick \$600 on seven swings of a golf club. It's only the third hole, and he's already down \$800 in side bets, but none of this sours his mood. Maybe he takes some consolation in the knowledge that it won't end as badly as it did for one newcomer

to the game. Playing on a typical Saturday morning, this guy got carried away with a variety of bets, didn't handle the pressure very well, and needed to retrieve \$36,000 in cash from the trunk of his car to pay off his opponents.

By the end of today's round, the wins and losses will come to around \$2,000 per player, the results tallied over beers with a level of seriousness and cross-checking that suits the stakes. Relatively speaking, it's small potatoes. But, considering that these guys play four or five days per week, the money can add up.

"We gamble for enough that you can lose \$10,000 in a week—and the club is closed on Mondays," says Phil, passing a four-figure check across the table. "Nobody wants to do that. But, on the other hand, you want enough money at stake so that when you do lose, you feel it. It gets your attention and keeps your blood flowing."

AMPING UP THE ADRENALINE

For Eddie, it's a reason to tee it up in the first place. During his early 20s he played in a competitive after-work basketball league. When his knees blew out, he needed to find another sport, and golf looked like a good one. But he found his 18-hole outings lacking in adrenaline production—until he had something riding on his play. The action gave him the incentive to become a 5-handicap golfer. It's also endowed him with cachet as a clutch specialist, the kind of guy who might botch the front nine and dig deep to make it all up on the back. "Let's say you get two guys who have the same ability, and there's money on the round," Phil says. "Eddie is the guy I'll want to bet on." Adds a fellow who has partnered with him and played against him: "Eddie makes 15-foot putts until people's eyes bleed. He'll make 15 pars in a round, and that puts the pressure on anyone who's trying to beat him."

This manifested itself not long ago on the 18th hole at Shadow Creek, where Eddie was down \$3,000 on the round. With \$2,000 worth of bets riding on the hole, tying it would

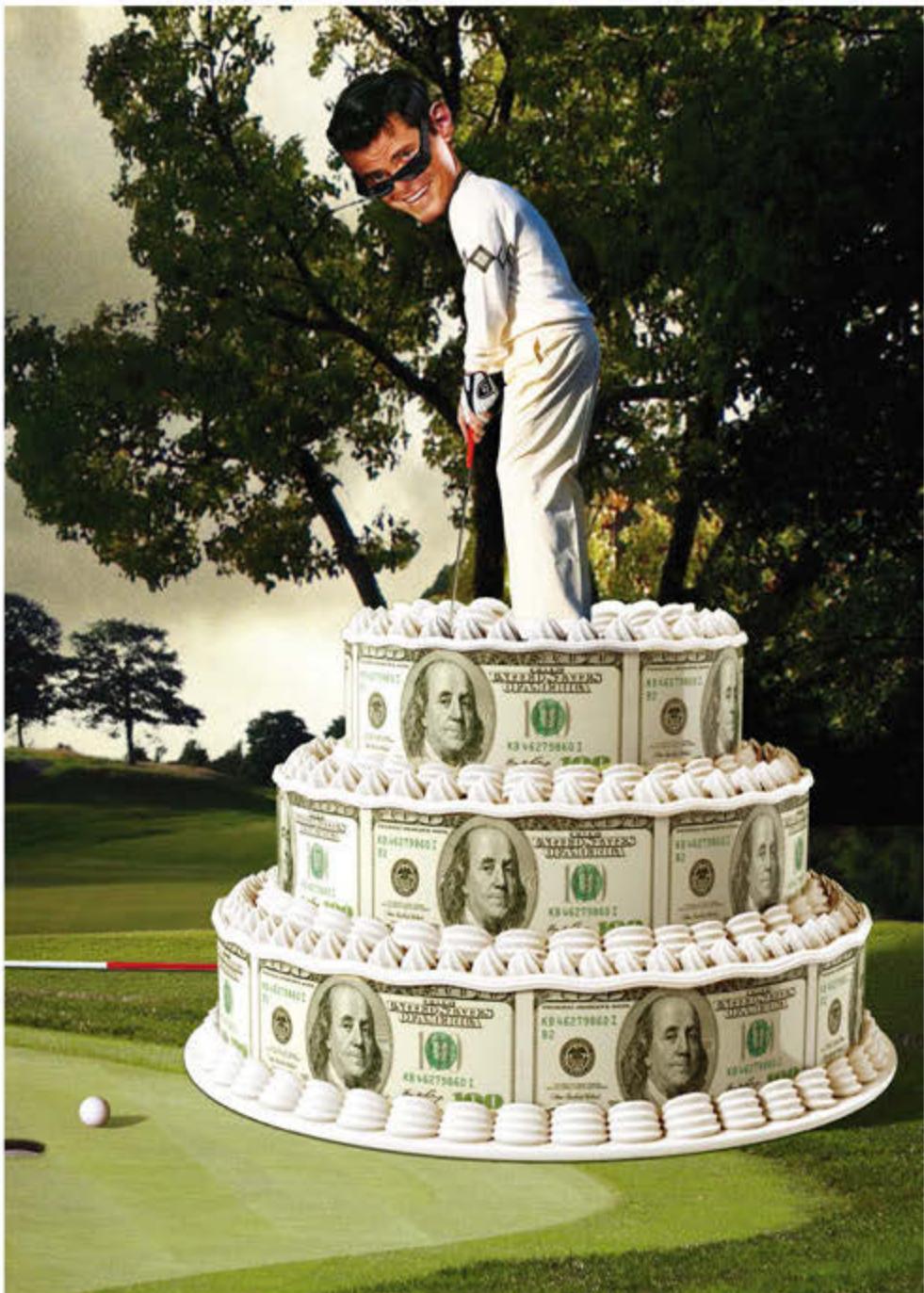
have cost him \$3,000 overall, losing would have cost him \$5,000, and winning would have cost him \$1,000 on the round. "I called for an aloha—it's our slang for adding an extra bet on winning the hole—in this case \$500," Eddie says. "My partner didn't want it because things had been going so badly for us. Gambler that I am, I took both sides," meaning that Eddie bet an extra \$500 on him winning the hole and \$500 on his partner winning it. "I made a birdie with a 20-foot

putt, my partner won the hole, and I managed to break even instead of losing \$3,000," Eddie says. "That one totally felt like a win. The stress of needing to do it is what gambling golf junkies live for. If I don't have the feeling that I need to win the hole, it's just not any fun for me. Yes, there's plenty of tension, but it's good tension."

That said, he finishes his post-round beer and heads off to play in a pricey gin game that usually follows mornings of golf.

KID POKER TRIES GOLF

Back in the early 2000s, when Eddie was just starting to take golf seriously, Daniel Negreanu established himself as one of the top no-limit Texas Hold 'em players in the world. It earned him a nickname: Kid Poker. Soon after, when online poker began to flourish and the game's top players had money to burn, he decided to join his high-stakes pals on the golf course. Negreanu, now 40, im-





The worst hazard on a golf course may be above it.

Golf courses are filled with obstacles and hazards: sand traps, streams, ponds, and the rough. With one more potential hazard above the golf course. Nearly 5 million people are treated for skin cancer in the United States every year. At MD Anderson, we hope you'll take a few extra moments to apply sunscreen to protect your skin (about 30 minutes before heading outside). To be even safer, seek shade whenever possible and wear a wide-brimmed hat as well as sunglasses. Call toll free 1-855-894-0145, or visit MakingCancerHistory.com/PGATOUR.



Ranked one of the top two hospitals for cancer care in the nation for 25 years by U.S. News & World Report.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD Anderson
~~Cancer Center~~



Official Cancer Center
of the PGA TOUR

mediately discovered that his nickname was nontransferable. Playing golf against the likes of Doyle Brunson and the late Chip Reese, well-known as astute poker players, "I should have known I was in trouble," he says. "They offered me a certain number of strokes, and I agreed. Later, I found out that they had never seen anything like that. Nobody just agrees. Usually there's a ton of haggling. My first day out, I lost \$550,000. Mike Sexton [co-host of World Poker Tour telecasts] was the third guy I played with. He was supposed to be a bogey-shooter and shot 75. Like everybody else, Mike told me that he shot the best round of his life when he played against me."

Brunson remembers the day. "I thought it was fair," he says. "I was playing on one leg and had to use a crutch to get to the ball." Adds Sexton: "Daniel thought I hustled him, but I didn't. It was a freak, and he's still bitter about it." The differences between Eddie's matches and Negreanu's are significant. Among Eddie's crowd, rules are in place to prevent people from trying to gain an unfair advantage, and the game is more about competition than money. The high stakes are simply a way of keeping everybody playing hard and staying focused. In Negreanu's world, some guys play for their livelihoods, no real mercy gets shown to newcomers, and the rules are loose enough that few people look askance at an opponent greasing his clubheads with Vaseline (to minimize hooks and slices). At his golf-gambling nadir, Negreanu estimates that he fell behind by \$2 million to \$3 million.

To fight back, Negreanu did what all the other high-stakes guys were doing: He hired a full-time caddie. Now he doesn't play a round without Christian Sanchez, a scratch golfer who had PGA Tour ambitions, on his bag. "I've never gotten to play on the tour, but I play for tour-size money," says Sanchez, 33. Early in their career together, he says, Negreanu squared off against poker pro Patrik Antonius for \$150,000 a hole. "Daniel told me we were playing for 150K a hole, like it was nothing. But I had to get my footing under me."

On the course, Sanchez is part teacher, part guardian angel. "Before I began working with Christian, if I started badly I'd fall apart on the fifth hole," Negreanu says. "Christian has shown me how to overcome those situations. Plus he literally lines up shots for me and makes sure I don't get into unfair wagers. In fact, after he reads the green, he physically lines me up. Then I make the putt. He does all the work, and I have all the fun. I've had people ask me if he holds my d--- when I go to the bathroom. But I don't care. Thanks to my caddie, I've won back the \$2 [million] or \$3 million, plus some gravy. I capitalized on how bad everybody thought I was."

He also found that poker superstar

'Unless I see some of your blood, or you see some of my blood, this is not real exciting for me.'

Phil Ivey is one of the best guys to beat at golf. "He's a terrible loser and bitches the whole way. I've seen him walk off the course if he doesn't like how it's going. We played a match once with [handicaps], and he walked off because we were dead even on the ninth hole. He said it wasn't fair." (Golf Digest left multiple messages for Ivey and reached out to a representative, but there was no response from Ivey.)

Veteran gambler Blair Rodman, who has been around the world of golf gambling since the 1980s, has some advice that could have helped Negreanu and others. "If you're going to play golf with gamblers, you need to know that you're not playing golf, you're gambling," he says. "People will try to get an edge; that's how it's done. I don't take anybody's handicap at face value. If you walk in with your eyes closed and make a bad game, you're not going to win."

And if you want to continue playing at this level, you will pay off the loss, even if it feels like you were hustled. Before teeing up with Eddie and his group, known club members get casually vetted to make sure they can afford to lose, and their betting starts slow. "We don't want anybody to get hurt," a regular tells me.

If, say, Eddie has brought you in from outside the club, he'll vouch for your honesty and ability to cover losses. The implication is that, when necessary, Eddie will take responsibility for the new player's debts. Among Negreanu's crowd, participants tend to be known gamblers or friends of known gamblers. Fail to pay up promptly and you'll be ostracized from any future action. You might also find people complaining bitterly about you on websites popular with gamblers, such as twoplustwo.com.

Tips to reduce your risk of ~~skin cancer~~

● Use sunscreen, always SPF 30 or higher. Apply a liberal amount (about the size of a golf ball) 30 minutes before going outside, and reapply every two hours.

● Stay in the shade. Look for shady areas when outside.

● Cover up. Wear dark, tightly woven clothing to protect your skin from the sun.

● Wear a hat. Pick one with a large brim to protect your ears and neck.

● Put on sunglasses. Look for lenses that provide both UVA and UVB protection.





If things get really knotty, professional gamblers have been known to call in a third party—usually another gambler—to mediate the dispute.

Layne Flack, 45, another poker pro who has developed a penchant for gambling at golf, lays out a recent on-the-course scenario. It began reasonably enough with a bunch of \$100 bets and only a few hundred dollars changing hands after the 18th hole. Next time out, the group upped the wager to an \$800-per-hole scramble, plus carryovers, and birdies paying double. "By the ninth hole," Flack says, "they had lost some carryovers and were down like \$20,000. They wanted to kick it up to \$5,000. I said no, because one birdie would get

them \$20,000. I let them go to \$3,000 per man, I made birdie, and they lost \$12,000 to be down \$32,000. We went to \$5,000 per hole, and by the day's end, we were ahead \$64,000. On the next day, it came down to the last hole. . . . I let them win a little back. Otherwise, they might not have wanted to pay. I wanted them to realize that they didn't get hustled and that maybe they could have played better. They paid."

Despite his obvious skill as a gambler, Flack insists he's never been much of a golfer. (Take this with as many grains of salt as you see fit.) "I've gotten good only in the last three years," he says. "Back when online poker

Please turn to page 123

5 TIPS FOR THE NON-BETTOR

You just wanted to play for playing's sake. You didn't need or want the nassau bet or the baggage that comes with it—the trash-talking, the scorecard gymnastics, the handicap whining, the scowls of concentration, or the pressure. But you wound up paired with the club's version of Eddie and his pals. Not wanting to spoil their fun, you played for money—albeit for less than \$1,000 a hole—but hated it. As you drove home, you wondered for the thousandth time, *Who's the crazy one here, me or Eddie?*

The short answer is, neither. The golf gambler is not necessarily the craven degenerate

the non-bettor makes him out to be. Conversely, the non-bettor is not the tea-sipping spoilsport the bettors claim.

"People satisfy their golf jones in different ways," says Dr. Gio Valiante, an acclaimed sport psychologist who in 2010 coached seven players to eight PGA Tour victories. Some people—Phil Mickelson is a good example—enjoy the *mano-a-mano* confrontation. They love golf, but it's more satisfying and more fun when it's personal.

"Then there's the group that would include Jack Nicklaus and Ben Hogan," Valiante says. "They are the 'mastery' individuals. Their opponents are the golf course, improving their technique, honing their strategy. They enjoy competition and beating people, but it's less personalized. They are every bit as invested, but their motivations are different."

Adds Hale Irwin, a three-time U.S. Open

champion: "Some people don't feel stimulated if they don't have skin in the game. When I played practice rounds with Lanny Wadkins or Ray Floyd, they always wanted to play for money. I'd go along with it; I wasn't averse to it. But I never felt it took a \$50 bet to make me try. I'm always going to play hard anyway."

There seems to be a third set of golfers who go to the golf course for fresh air, exercise, being with friends and observing the beauty of nature. They like the clothes, the gear and the beverage cart. They appear indifferent to improving and, win or lose, smile easily. They often do not carry handicaps. Like their mastery cousins, they aren't particularly enthusiastic about playing for \$10.

Population-wise, the last two groups are clearly outnumbered by the betting crowd. If you dislike betting and wonder why the numbers are slanted toward the 80-percent active-betting figure Michael Kaplan references in the accompanying story, you can blame the lure of money itself.

"People have strong emotional, even physiological, reactions when they see money," Valiante says. "We've been conditioned to that outside of golf our whole lives, and that response is not going to be turned off when you go to the golf course. If anything, it's going to be heightened."

So the non-bettor is faced with a decision: Become irritated every time a bet is proposed—which means being irritated most of the time—or somehow learn to accept it. Or maybe even embrace it. Here are some fresh perspectives that will make those nassau propositions bearable.

1 Bettors aren't inherently evil.

"Most people who like gambling don't even know why they like it," Valiante says. "They like it for the same reason they like ice cream. It floods the pleasure centers of their brains. They're playing more for personal reward than to inflict pain."

2 Think of it as prep for the member-guest.

"I'm a big believer in practicing like you play," says PGA Tour winner Gary Woodland. "When I play for something in practice rounds, I'm not going to let my guard down. It's not a lot of pressure, but it keeps me sharp. It helps me hit the ground running when the tournament starts."

3 It will even out in the long run.

For all but the worst vanity-handicappers—players who artificially keep their handicaps

low to show off—golf betting is an ebb-and-flow phenomenon. If you play lousy and lose money, your handicap will rise, and eventually you'll acquire an edge and recoup those losses.

4 Make the worst-case scenario acceptable.

"Never play for so much that losing hurts you," says Chris Kirk, a three-time winner on tour. "It can sting a little but shouldn't leave a mark. If you're playing for \$20 a hole and you're late on your rent payment, that's probably too much."

5 Forget the noise.

"The presses, gamesmanship and personalities, they're all clutter," Valiante says. "Forget about them. If you orient yourself to your opponent or the bet, that's when you choke. Focus on the golf course, your next shot and especially the target. Do that, and the results will take care of themselves."

—GUY YOCOM

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UP TO
5 MPH
FASTER
BALL SPEED*

XR
BUILT FOR
OUTRAGEOUS
SPEED.

SHAPE





POUND FOR POUND, NOBODY PUNCHES HARDER THAN' THESE LPGA STARS

BY MAX ADLER

'BOXING, BIKING OR WEIGHTS—MY DAY FEELS WEIRD IF I DON'T WORK OUT.' —LEXI THOMPSON



WE'RE NOT SHOWING YOU PHOTOS of Lexi, Michelle, Cheyenne and Stacy in workout gear just for fun. Fact is, if you want to hit the ball farther, you have more to learn from these women than from some galoot on the PGA Tour. Let's be honest: You're never going to swing the club as fast as the top few hundred men on the planet. And though it seems unbelievable, most of those guys aren't maximizing their distance anyway. Maybe because the female anatomy isn't designed to house as much bulk, LPGA Tour players have become the experts at squeezing every last yard a body can produce. From how they swing to how they train, there's a lot for male mortals to copy.

"It's my constant message when I talk to club pros," says Dave Phillips, co-founder of the Titleist Performance Institute. "For members who want to hit it longer, you need to get them to look more closely at women."

Despite a size advantage that can't be all attributable to his gut, the typical guy doesn't hit it in the same zip code as a female pro. According to Arccos Golf, the maker of a stats-tracking system that pairs sensors in your grips with the GPS in your smartphone, the average drive of 30-year-old dudes (in this case, a self-selecting group that's avid and curious enough to buy such a system) travels 232 yards. Stacy Lewis, who is 5-feet-5 and 42nd in the LPGA Tour's distance ranking, hits it 252. The longest woman, 5-6 Yani Tseng, is popping it out there 278.

But the weekend warrior should be encouraged that he and the typical LPGA Tour player swing the driver at the same speed: 94 miles per hour. Why do the women get so much more buck for their bang? Obviously, striking the ball with the middle of the clubface helps, but there's more to it. First is understanding how at the elite level, the female driver swing is fundamentally different from that of the male. Pardon any sweeping observations, but speaking broadly is a necessary evil for the topic.

"Without a doubt, LPGA Tour players are more efficient than the average PGA Tour player at maximizing every bit of clubhead speed," says Justin Padjen of TrackMan, who spends time on both tours providing fitting advice. "The typical PGA Tour player is





**'I THOUGHT I HAD STRONG LEGS, BUT I DIDN'T.
NOW I'M REALLY ABLE TO USE MY LOWER BODY TO
GENERATE POWER.' —MICHELLE WIE**

NIKE top, \$60
tights, \$130
shoes, \$100

swinging the driver at 113 miles per hour and launching the ball at 11 degrees with 2,600 rpm of spin. That's *not* the way to hit the ball if the end goal is strictly distance."

Padjen says the unrealized potential lies in attack angle, the path the clubhead is moving up or down as it strikes the ball. According to his research, PGA Tour players tend to present the clubhead level or at minus-1 degree, which is hitting down on the ball slightly. This is a choice of control over power. "They're optimal for their speed and attack angle," Padjen says, "but their attack angle is what prevents them from hitting it farther."

Adds Phillips: "With men, you see more stable, centered swings. They already have the speed, so they're mostly trying to cover the ball, squeeze it out

there to make sure they find the fairway." Because slower swings are less prone to wild misses, "women can hit way up on the ball more like long-drive guys," he says. Indeed, the average angle of attack for an LPGA player's drive is around plus-2 or plus-3 degrees, says Padjen, who has seen several women hit up on the ball as much as 6 degrees.

"The fellas hang on to lag longer, whereas the girls release the club earlier with more of a sweeping motion," says Golf Digest Teaching Professional David Leadbetter. "As much as some guys might not like to hear it, the girls get the club swinging in a much freer manner. Guys get so connected. Male pros generate power by rotating the torso; females sort of halt the body at impact and let the arms extend forward. If

you can free your arms like this, you're more likely to hit a nicely shaped draw."

In this way, women are perhaps a product of circumstance. PGA Tour setups tend to reward meaty carry distances over hazards, perfect for a reliable power fade. LPGA Tour courses—and likely your home course—encourage finding distance with drives that roll out.

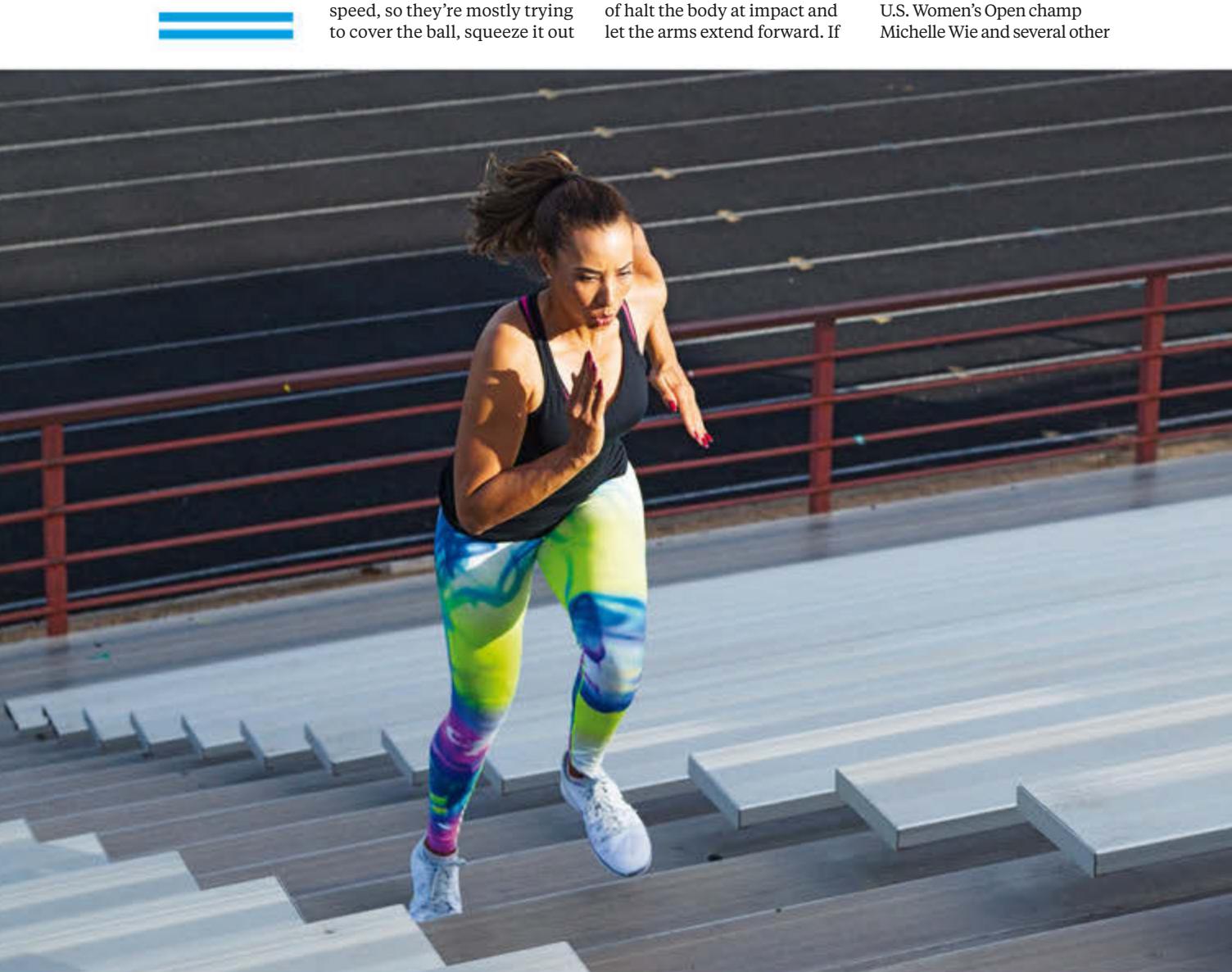
A key to that bounding LPGA Tour draw? You won't find it by studying the swings of Tiger Woods or Adam Scott. Instead, check out our cover subject: "As I hit the ball, I get way up on both of my toes, and that's how I got the nickname Tippy Toes," Lexi Thompson says.

"You see a lot of girls with both heels off the ground at impact," says Leadbetter, who coaches U.S. Women's Open champ Michelle Wie and several other



'IT'S COOL TO SHOW
THAT GOLFERS ARE
ATHLETES, TOO.'

—CHEYENNE WOODS





LPGA standouts. "They come out of their spine angle at impact and stand up straight like a baseball slugger." If this freewheeling, unorthodox motion reminds you of someone on the PGA Tour, it's probably the distance king. You heard it here first: Bubba Watson swings like a girl.

"Bubba Watson's is actually the only swing I've ever heard television commentators compare mine with," Thompson says.

Adds Padjen: "Bubba's interesting. Depending on the trajectory of the tee shot he's trying to hit, we've seen his attack angle range anywhere from plus-3 to minus-3. It's what makes him a magician." Bubba learned his swing slapping Wiffle balls around his back yard, but others have tried ingraining this "LPGA Tour move" more deliberately. Jumbo Ozaki once trained with a baseball coach to groove the stand-up motion just for his tee ball.

SLAP SHOTS

Applying power secrets from other sports has also been Thompson's trade. Three years ago she connected with Craig Slaunwhite, then the strength and conditioning coach for the Florida Panthers hockey team. The lie angle of a hockey stick is similar to that of a golf club, and crossover legends range from long-drive bruiser Jamie Sadlowski to, of course, Happy Gilmore.

"Craig was all about strengthening my core. I basically live standing on a Bosu ball," Thompson says, referring to the inflatable, unstable, hemispherical platform. Her balance is such that she can hold herself upright on a physio ball by just gripping it with her knees, all while performing medicine-ball throws. "Exercises like this help build the strength so you can swing

YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST: BUBBA WATSON SWINGS LIKE A GIRL.

within yourself," she says. "A lot of amateurs over-swing because they're not strong enough to stay in control."

Slaunwhite's other contribution was getting Thompson into boxing. "I love it," Lexi says. "Punching teaches you to get power with your whole body. And it gets the anger out. Like the golf course, you can get in your own little world where nothing matters." Slaunwhite has relocated to Canada, but the seed has been planted. Thompson is house-hunting in the Jupiter area, and she says if she gets one that will accommodate a gym, one of her early acquisitions will be a heavy bag.

Cheyenne Woods says at least a few yards of her 251 average are thanks to fitness training, but she's quicker to speak of the psychological benefits: "I just love being outside, the adrenaline, and knowing that I'm fit." On a given week home in Phoenix, she'll spend two afternoons at a local high school running on the track and jumping up the bleachers. The students don't recognize her, and those who approach will ask if she's training for a specific race. "It's nice to be mistaken as a track athlete," Woods laughs. (She did compete in the long jump and triple jump her sophomore year of high school.) "People are usually like, 'Wow, I didn't know golfers ran.' It's cool to show that golfers are athletes, too."

The rest of the week Woods attends group-conditioning classes where the temperature is cranked to 105 degrees. The exercises incorporate only body weight, such as lunges and mountain-climbers. "You never know what you're getting yourself into," Woods says. "You're dripping with sweat, and you just go until he says, 'Stop,' so it's really mental."

"The girl's got drive," says trainer Karen Mullarkey, who lists Woods among her clients with LPGA aspirations. "But she'd never really been pushed hard, because I think her previous coaches were nervous of injuries."

Mullarkey isn't cavalier, especially when her client recently earned her first LPGA Tour card, but she laments that female athletes are often not evaluated and challenged appropriately. Initially, Woods was "quad-dominant," meaning the muscles on the front side of her lower body overmatched the strength of her hamstrings, calves and glutes on the back side. This imbalance is a common condition among women, Mullarkey says, largely because of the wider angle at which the femur meets the knee, an accommodation for childbirth. For this reason, Mullarkey usually assigns two days of leg work a week for female clients, as opposed to one for males.

"My tendency was for my right knee to kick in too early on the downswing, so I'd either hit a push or a hook," Woods says. "Now that we've strengthened my hips and butt, I'm doing much better with that."

DEVELOPING SPEED

Relative to men, women are strongest in their legs. In one major study, a group of women were found to be only 52 percent as strong as men in their upper body, but 66 percent as strong in the lower body. Yet for female golfers, making their lower body even stronger can be smart. "Women have the great ability to create torque because they can turn better than men, and that's why you see a lot of long swings on the LPGA Tour," Phillips says. "If a woman can get a really strong

lower body, she can develop speed just as quick as a man."

Adds Leadbetter: "Michelle [Wie] was 20 yards longer when she was 13 than she is now. She was carrying the ball 260 to 270. She had so much shoulder turn against very little hip turn, high hands, and this incredible whiplike action. I haven't seen anything like it before or since."

Freakish distance is nice, but it doesn't make a complete player. Several months before she won the U.S. Women's Open, Wie told trainer David Donatucci of the Florida Institute of Performance that her goal for the 2014 season was to be injury-free.

"She was almost too flexible in the wrong parts," Donatucci says. "Her joints were overstressed." Because Wie looked fantastic and ate nutritiously, "she had the belief she was in great shape, but we saw faulty movement patterns when she did squats or stepped onto a box with one leg," Donatucci says. After diligently targeting specific small-muscle groups with corrective exercises, Wie has a swing that's more stable than ever.

"Doesn't matter if you're a man or woman," Leadbetter says. "As you age, your flexibility might lessen, although your strength increases. You end up generating power in a different way."

As much as Wie's body has improved, Stacy Lewis is one of Donatucci's best clients. "She sets the bar for everybody else here, guys included," he says. "She's never without her logbook, and she's always trying to lift more weight." That includes 115 pounds on a single-leg squat. Not too shabby for someone who weighs just 125 pounds.

"I don't know how hard the PGA Tour guys work out, but out here we're working pretty hard," says Thompson, who would happily take 15 more pounds of muscle tomorrow for her 6-foot frame. "Even after long days, there are a lot of girls in the fitness trailer."

As Lexi and friends continue to inspire young girls and draw promising athletes who might have played softball or field hockey, the LPGA Tour awaits a player averaging 300-yard drives. She's out there. 



KIRAGRACE
leggings, \$88
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shoes, \$120



**'THE BANDS ALLOW ME
TO DO ON THE ROAD WHAT
I'D DO IN MY GYM.'**
—STACY LEWIS

POWER

A large black tire tread is positioned in the lower right corner, angled towards the center. The background is a yellow and black checkered pattern, suggesting a racing track or a sports arena.

108 GOLFDIGEST.COM | MAY 2016

Reigning world long-drive champ **JEFF FLAGG** shares



SOURCE

his secrets for hitting a 463-yard drive. (Hint: It starts in the gym)



Photographs by Dom Furore

B

BEFORE TWO YEARS AGO, Jeff Flagg's biggest sports accomplishment was a five-year stint in the minor leagues playing first base. The 6-foot-6, 240-pound native of Jacksonville thought his destiny was Major League Baseball. Instead, he should have paid more attention to "the sound." ▶ "My father still talks about it," Flagg says. "I was about 15, and we were playing golf at this muny. A bunch of guys were all around me on this tee box that was tucked back into the trees—like a theater. I was using these hand-me-down clubs, and I absolutely crushed a drive. The sound was unreal. It reverberated off the trees, and the ball flew 50 to 60 yards past the next-closest ball. That's the first time I ever remember knowing I had a knack for hitting long drives." ▶ When his baseball career stalled, Flagg decided to see how much of a knack he really had. Smart move. In just his second attempt, the 29-year-old won the Re/Max World Long Drive Championship last fall in Mesquite, Nev., and \$250,000 with a 365-yard blast in the finals. During the competition, he also hit one 463 yards, a personal best. (The ball carried about 425, he says.) ▶ "Later on I was allowed to walk out onto the grid and see the spot where the ball came to rest," he says. "I looked back and couldn't see the tee. It was like driving a par 5." ▶ When Flagg isn't bombing tee shots, he's in the gym working as a personal trainer for his new company, REPS Golf, or working on his body in hopes of defending his long-drive title in November. Here he shares his favorite tips for crushing the ball off the tee. —RON KASPRISKE

HITTING THE BALL FAR IS A CULMINATION OF THINGS. You gotta be strong. You gotta be fast. And it all has to work together. But if you're asking me what matters most, it's solid contact. Hit it in the middle of the clubface, and even if you didn't do everything right, it's still going to go somewhere.

▶ ▶ **THE ONE I HIT 463 . . .** I had a pretty good breeze behind me, so I knew if I made an adjustment to my swing, I could take advantage of the wind. I swung like Big Papi hitting a home run. I call it "back-legging it," meaning I feel like I'm sitting on my back leg a little longer. I still get over to my left side, but staying behind the ball longer allows me to launch it higher and ride the breeze.

▶ ▶ **I KNOW AMATEURS SWING OFF THE BACK FOOT A LOT.** If they back-legged it instead, they'd sweep the ball off the tee and really gain some distance. What's the difference? Don't finish the swing on your back foot. You want your weight moving toward the target at some point in the downswing, just not immediately as you start down. Think of a batter hitting a high fly ball to get a runner in from third.

THE LENGTH OF YOUR BACKSWING DOESN'T MATTER.

What matters is that it ends when you feel coiled but not stressed. At the top of my swing, I can have a normal conversation with you. I'm not straining. If you start straining, you'll lose the energy you were trying to store for the hit.

▶ ▶ **WHAT AM I THINKING ABOUT WHEN I SWING?** My only real thought is, *Right hand and arm drive the swing*. That's it. I'm literally trying to make a sidearm throwing motion—like a 3-6-3 double play in baseball. If more golfers swung with the same motion, as if they were skipping stones, they'd pound the ball.

I RELATE THE GOLF SWING TO SPRINTING.

For me, the feel is that my arms are out-racing my body. You know what track coaches say: "Fast arms equal fast feet." It's similar in golf. The faster my arms can go, the faster the club is moving.

▶ ▶ **IN TRUTH, MY HIPS LEAD THE DOWNSWING.** But I don't think about that. They just do. Do you think pitchers, quarterbacks or javelin throwers think about clearing their hips before they throw? Their arms dictate all of that motion subconsciously.

IF YOU NEED ONE THING TO FOCUS ON, MAKE IT SWINGING YOUR ARMS AS FAST AS YOU CAN.

▶ ▶ **YOU WERE BORN WITH THE ABILITY TO HIT THE BALL FAR.** Just like you could run, skip, hop and jump when you were a kid. What happens over time is, we forget how to be athletic. You lose the ability to swing hard because you stop moving how you were designed to move.

▶ ▶ **GYMS TODAY ARE A JOKE.** They're filled with treadmills, elliptical machines, squat racks, benches. Everything trains people in only the sagittal plane—forward and back, like you're a robot. Train like a robot, swing like a robot.

▶ ▶ **TRAIN ON YOUR FEET AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.** Pushing, pulling, rotating, moving laterally and diagonally, changing directions quickly. The more you work out like that, the more coordinated you'll be. You'll get your athlete back.

▶ ▶ **TIGER RECENTLY SAID HIS GLUTES SHUT OFF.** Honestly? Society's glutes have shut off. We're sitting too much, which is why so many people have low-back pain. Anything athletic starts with strong glutes.

WHAT'S THE BEST EXERCISE TO HIT THE BALL FARTHER?

Can I pick two? Run sprints and throw balls—hard.

▶ ▶ **ONE OF THE REASONS I LIKE TO SPRINT IS,** it's a dynamic, powerful motion that starts quickly and ends quickly. You're using the ground for leverage, the muscles are moving in coordination, a lot is going on, and then in a flash it ends—just like a golf swing. And throwing teaches you how the body and arms work together, as they do when you swing the club.

▶ ▶ **REMEMBER ONE THING:** Your body is *not* going to let you swing any faster than you can stop the club.

▶ ▶ **WHEN I TRAIN,** the muscles on the back side get most of my attention. The glutes, hamstrings, back muscles—you can never get those muscles too strong. You need them not only for good posture and balance, but to safely stop a fast swing. I train the back side in a 3-to-1 ratio versus the front side.

▶ ▶ **BE CAREFUL OF SO-CALLED "GOLF-SPECIFIC" EXERCISES** that get you to mimic swings with objects considerably heavier than a club. The big thing in the weight room is to take care of your joints. Put too much stress on them, and you're going to get hurt.

▶ ▶ **PLAY GOLF WITH THE SAME THOUGHT IN MIND.** Swing in control to protect your joints. If you're feeling sore the day after a round, back it down a notch.

▶ ▶ **MY BALL TENDS TO FADE,** but the shot shape that will get you the most distance is the straight ball. That's why I have a neutral grip. Some guys grip it with their hands turned almost under the shaft—a super strong position—and try to rip a big draw. That's inefficient. Use a neutral grip, and focus on squaring the club at impact.

▶ ▶ **A 400-YARD DRIVE FEELS LIKE NOTHING.** In fact, if you try to put extra effort into the swing, you're probably not going to hit the ball very far. Let me ask you: What does it feel like when you hit your longest tee shots? I'll bet you can't describe it. ☺



'TRAIN ON YOUR FEET AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE...YOU'LL GET YOUR ATHLETE BACK.'





NEED MORE T?

INCREASING YOUR TESTOSTERONE
WILL HELP YOU HIT BIGGER DRIVES

BY RON KASPRISKE



YOU'RE NOT HITTING THE BALL AS FAR AS YOU USED TO, you can blame your ball, clubs or swing—or all three. But Dr. Ara Suppiah says the reason could be more primal: "As we get older, our testosterone levels drop, and this is the hormone you need for power. Even worse, in many cases men accelerate the drop with unhealthy living habits." The natural reduction for men is about 1 percent each year past age 30, the Mayo Clinic reports. But if you're not eating right, sleeping well and exercising, the loss can be more rapid. Suppiah, a sports-medicine specialist who is a consultant for several players on the PGA Tour, says a healthy male 45 to 55 should have a testosterone count of about 500 or higher. Women also produce testosterone but in significantly lower quantities (the normal range is 18 to 70). If your blood tests indicate low levels of testosterone, you might be able to avoid synthetic steroid supplements—and their nasty side effects—by making lifestyle changes to boost levels naturally, Suppiah says. "The benefits go beyond hitting the ball farther. But there's nothing wrong with that being your motivation." Here is Suppiah's three-month game plan for increasing your T count.



WHERE TO START

Get your overall T levels tested—including your level of "free" testosterone—ideally twice. Free T is greatly responsible for sexual traits early in life and is linked to energy, sex drive and bone density as we age.

10 WAYS TO BOOST YOUR T

1 LIFT WEIGHTS Numerous studies indicate that performing multi-joint exercises such as squats, deadlifts and bench presses stimulate T production. Exercise also can reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

2 GET IN THE SUN Twenty minutes a day of unfiltered sun exposure will produce sufficient amounts of vitamin D3. This vitamin is known for improving overall bone health and neuromuscular function.

3 SLEEP BETTER Researchers at the University of Chicago Medical Center found that men who slept less than five hours a night for one week had up to 15 percent lower T than those who were better rested.

4 REDUCE INFLAMMATION Unhealthy habits such as excessive drinking, untreated allergies and overeating can keep the body in a state of chronic inflammation and hamper T production.

5 BACK OFF THE SUGAR Refined carbohydrates (think sweetened, processed foods) can make the body more resistant to the role of insulin as a blood-sugar regulator. When that happens, testosterone production also slows. Furthermore, foods high in polyunsaturated fats (think foods fried in cooking oils) inhibit the enzyme 5-alpha reductase from metabolizing testosterone.

6 AVOID GLUTEN Gluten is a protein found in many grains and is commonly consumed in bagels, cereals, salad dressings and mayonnaise. Any intolerance to this protein leads to gut inflammation and its power-zapping side effects (see No. 4).

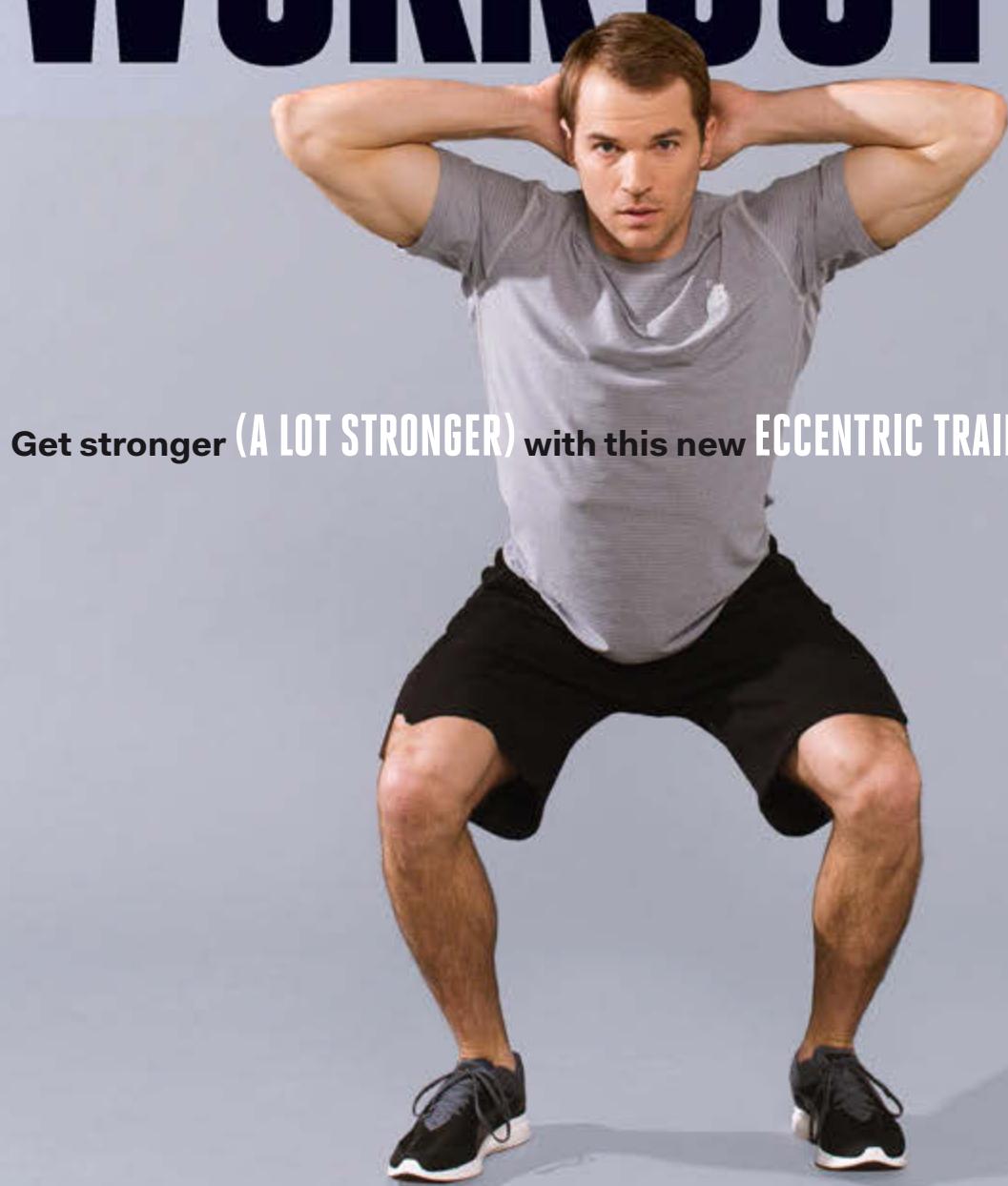
7 REMEMBER TO BUY avocados, almonds, oregano—anything high in omega-3 fatty acids. These acids balance hormone function, including testosterone production.

8 EAT BEANS or any other foods high in magnesium. This mineral has been shown to boost T levels in athletes as well as sedentary people.

9 GRAB A HANDFUL OF BRAZIL NUTS for selenium and good cholesterol. The cells in the testes needed to produce testosterone—the Leydig cells—will function better.

10 HERBS CAN HELP Tap into your inner Eastern philosophy by eating extract from maca and tongkat ali plants. Both are widely believed to be T boosters.

WORK OUT IN



Get stronger **(A LOT STRONGER)** with this new **ECCENTRIC TRAINING** program



321 FOREVER

WHEN

When you think about exercises, you probably focus on the first part of the movement—like the push in push-up. But what happens on the way back down is equally if not more important in terms of strength gains and injury prevention. For example, when jumping from a squat position (*far left*), it's the landing—not the jump—that's too often ignored. “People don't get hurt jumping, they get hurt landing,” says Golf Digest fitness advisor Ben Shear. “And in golf, stopping the swing is causing most of the injuries. If you want to swing harder for power, you have to train your body to decelerate safely.”

► The process is called eccentric training, but you might think of it as working out in reverse. It emphasizes the second half of an exercise, like the lowering portion of a pull-up (*left*). The muscles are lengthening and contracting as they resist an opposing force, usually gravity. Here Shear has developed an eccentric workout for golfers. When doing the exercises, use a 1-1-4 tempo for each rep. Example: One second to pull up, one second to hold the up position, and four seconds to lower the body. Do this workout twice a week, and before long you'll be able to swing the club “harder and safer,” Shear says. —Ron Kaspriske



1

HAMSTRING DIPS

HOW TO

From a kneeling position with your feet securely anchored and your body upright, lower your torso forward, stopping just before gravity pulls you all the way down. Then slowly rise back to the start position. Try to keep your back straight and pelvis forward throughout.

5

RESISTED TORSO ROTATIONS

HOW TO

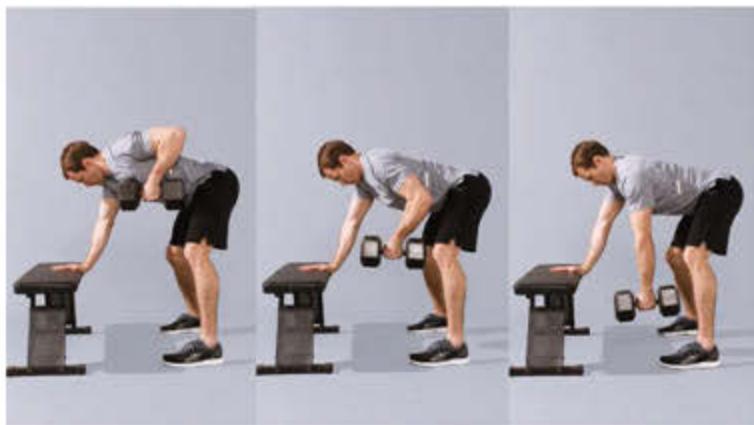
Hold a cable or resistance band in front of your chest, arms extended and band taut. Keep your head still as you quickly rotate your torso in one direction until you feel fully wound. Then slowly unwind in the opposite direction. Keep your lower body fairly still.

2

REVERSE CHEST PRESSES

HOW TO

Grab two dumbbells that are heavy but manageable. Lie back on a bench and press the dumbbells above your chest at a normal pace. Then slowly lower the dumbbells to your chest before quickly pushing them back up again. Resist the urge to arch your back as you press up.



3

BENT-OVER REVERSE ROWS

HOW TO

Grab a dumbbell with one hand, and plant your opposite hand on the side of a bench. While pushing into the bench, quickly pull the weight up to your side, then slowly lower it back down before quickly pulling it back up again. Try to keep your back straight and head down throughout.

6

LET DOWNS

HOW TO

Hold on to a pull-up bar with an overhand grip, and quickly lift your body until your head is above the bar. Then slowly lower your body until your arms are completely extended below the bar. Pull back up—if you can—and repeat. Try to prevent your body from rocking.

4

LOWERING SPLIT-SQUATS

HOW TO

Holding two dumbbells above your shoulders in a kneeling split-stance, quickly rise straight up with your torso, then slowly lower your body back to the start position. Then quickly rise again. Keep your torso as upright as possible and your lead knee directly above the heel of that foot.



7

RESISTED LATERAL SIDESTEPS

HOW TO

Wrap a resistance band around your waist, and anchor the other end. Quickly sidestep away from the anchored point as far as you can. When the band is fully stretched, slowly sidestep back toward the anchored point, resisting the pull. Try to stay rigidly upright.

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DO 10 TO 12 REPS OF EACH EXERCISE, OR AS MANY AS YOU CAN. REMEMBER TO GO SLOW.



BIG F

HOW THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP BECAME A PLAYER

BECOMING “AN EVENT” IN GOLF ain’t easy. Patience is mandatory, and brazen ambition is a no-no. The Players Championship broke both rules but still succeeded in rising on the competitive landscape faster than any tournament in history. How? With quality components that parallel those found in the narratives of the game’s other enduring events and institutions.

The Players had the visionary impresario—then-PGA Tour commissioner Deane Be-

KEVIN C. COX/GETTY IMAGES



VENT

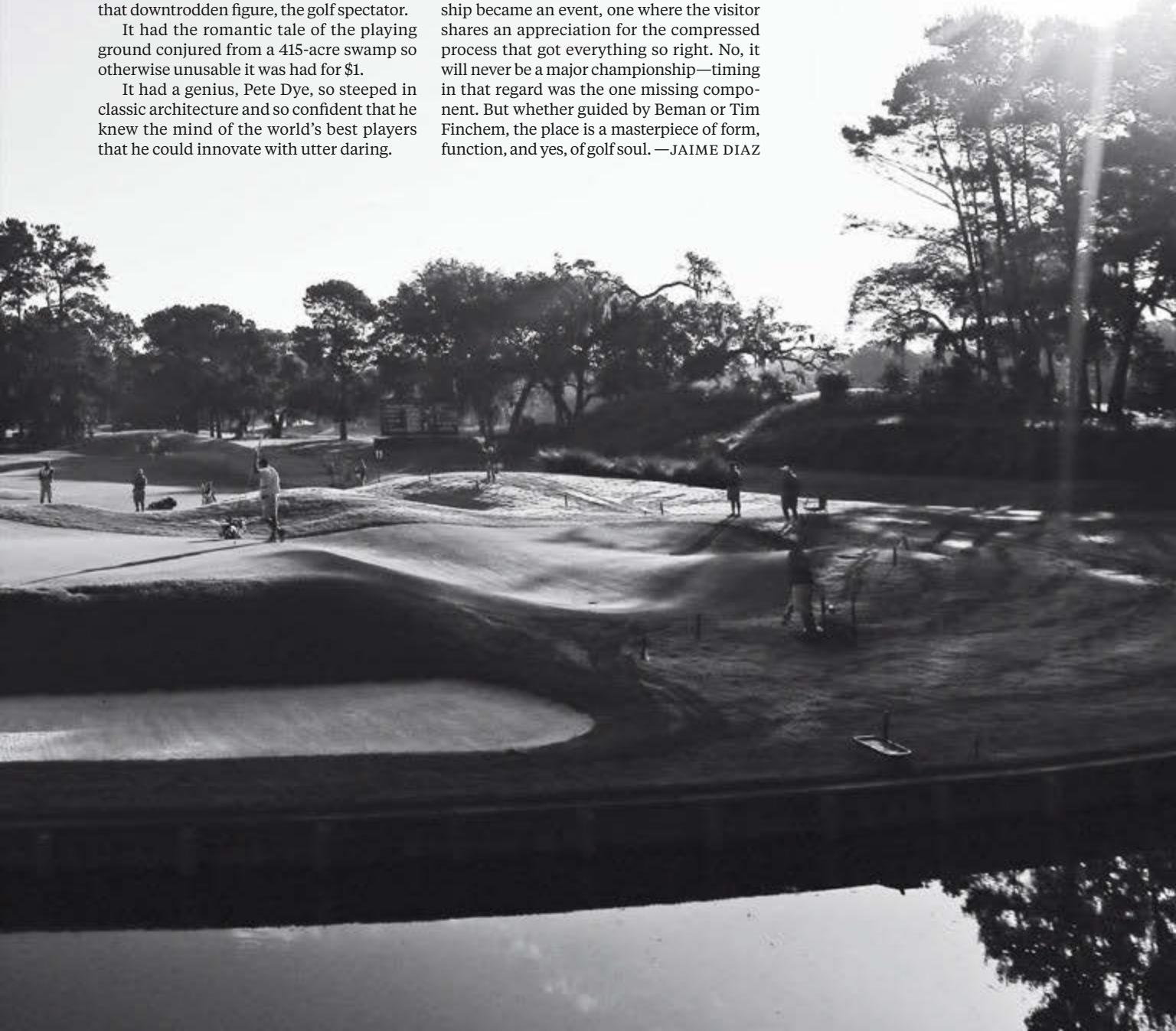
man—who in the 1970s channeled his Type AAA personality and feel for the game into a mission to elevate his organization, give it a home, and finally create a decent arena for that downtrodden figure, the golf spectator.

It had the romantic tale of the playing ground conjured from a 415-acre swamp so otherwise unusable it was had for \$1.

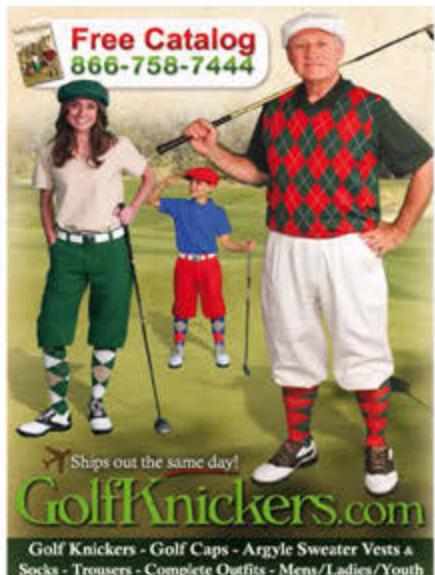
It had a genius, Pete Dye, so steeped in classic architecture and so confident that he knew the mind of the world's best players that he could innovate with utter daring.

Last, it had a true and distinct purpose for being an elite tournament of the players, by the players and for the players. And faster than even the Masters, the Players Championship became an event, one where the visitor shares an appreciation for the compressed process that got everything so right. No, it will never be a major championship—timing in that regard was the one missing component. But whether guided by Beman or Tim Finchem, the place is a masterpiece of form, function, and yes, of golf soul. —JAIME DIAZ

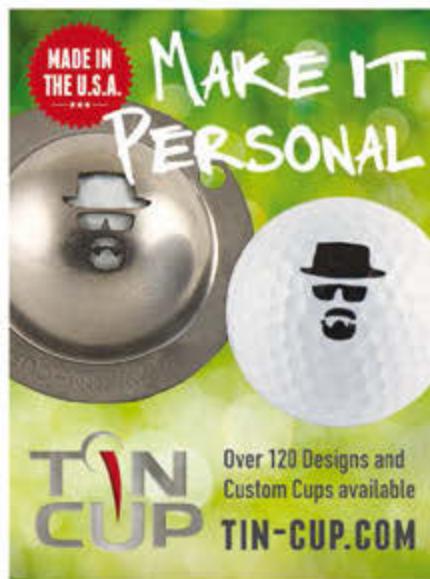
DISTINCTLY DYE Pete Dye's unique style, here at TPC Sawgrass' 558-yard 11th hole, will be on display May 7-10.



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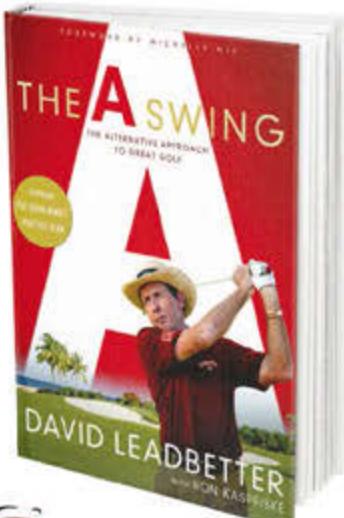
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**'IT'S NOT A LIVING,
IT'S EXCITEMENT'**

Over the past five years, a wholesaler we'll call Richie estimates that he has won \$300,000 on some of the best courses in New Jersey. For a while, he says, the cash enhanced his lifestyle. These days, he makes enough in his business that his golf proceeds add up to walking-around money. Nevertheless, he seems to fall into a category of recreational golfers who are just a shade away from the pro gamblers, going at it with the kind of aggression that blurs the line of a friendly game.

Take the time Richie went up against his club's champion for big bucks. That one sounds like the perfect ego boost with the potential for a big score. They play a game that allows them to double the stakes on any hole.

'If you're going to play golf with gamblers, you need to know that you're not playing golf, you're gambling.'

"You either play for double, or he pays off at the previous amount," says Richie, who is in his mid-40s. "Big holes went as high as five grand, and there's no shortage of controversy. If the other guy can't find his ball in the leaves, you're definitely going to double on him. I won \$50,000 that day from a guy who wasn't even playing with his own money. His brother-in-law staked him. My feeling is that if you can't put up \$5,000 or \$6,000 of your own money, you shouldn't even be playing golf."

That said, Richie insists that it's best all around if the stakes among friends don't get too high. "I know guys playing \$1,000 nassaus, and the games turn ugly," he says. "At this point in my life, I want to find games where I'm competing for something and finding it enjoyable. Nobody wants to play with the [jerks], and nobody wants to play with the fake-handicap guys. We've thrown guys out of our game for lying about their handicaps. Then I get people telling me that I'm making a living out on the course. I tell them that it's not a living, it's excitement. I make enough to pay my housekeeper. How's that for a living?"

For others operating in the gray area between businessman and gambler, the money reeled in could pay the housekeeper, nanny, chef and gardener. A Texas investor we'll call Matt acknowledges that he'd be disappointed to make less than \$100,000 per year from his golf gambling. If he's not playing for fun with his brother on a public course, he's usually looking to raise the stakes on someone. Hearing mention of the Negreanu and Flacks of the world, Matt says, "You don't want to play golf with poker players. They have no money. You want to play golf with businessmen who make a million dollars a year. I like to play against guys with overrated games and

plenty of money. Or else maybe an opponent who likes to drink on the course. That will get him a lot of offers for games."

Though Matt tries to keep things fairly friendly with his regular group of players—"Maybe \$500 nassaus, five ways"—there are some others with whom he likes to turn up the heat. "I have a couple games that are dead even," says Matt, who says his largest win stands at \$90,000 and largest loss is roughly half that. "We start at \$500 a hole, birdies are double, and the match is so square that we don't press bets. It's a dog-fight and"—he sounds not entirely thrilled here—"nobody's going to make a lot of money in the long term, but, hell, it's a lot of fun."

For more serious matches, says Matt, who's in his late 40s, players usually come over from other country clubs or even other states. Such was the case when Eddie and his crew flew in from California. "I played a match with him, played as good as I could play, and just barely beat him," Matt says, adding that the Californians dropped by for several days of golf and gambling. "After the match, Eddie said that he wasn't going to play against me anymore. He said that he'd rather call me partner. I said that was perfect. That day Eddie fell right into the game. We wound up [beating] the other guys, and they're still crying about it."

There are players who get turned on by doling out financial pain. Jason, an entrepreneur who sold his company and now spends his time playing golf for extremely high stakes, has seen it firsthand. He recalls a multi-day match in Northern California. One night, in the hotel dining room, he commented to his primary opponent that the play had been surprisingly close.

"He sat up in his chair," Jason says. "Then he leaned over and said, not in an ugly

way, 'Unless I see some of your blood, or you see some of my blood, this is not real exciting for me.' He wanted somebody to lose at least six figures, or else this whole thing would not do much for him. You hear a lot of interesting things and meet a lot of interesting people when you play high-stakes golf."

Though Jason, well into his senior years, does not need the money, he views a six-figure payday as the ultimate trophy. And, to get that money, he works as hard at golf as he did at business. "First of all, I don't ever think about the money," he says. "Instead of thinking about what you'll lose if you miss an eight-foot putt, you should be thinking about the execution of the putt. Once I make a match, the money is immaterial. I'm all about figuring out a way to win. Prior to the match, I work on my weaknesses. Most people who hit the driver good want to bang out balls on the driving range. I devote more time to improving the things I'm not good at. Because there's money at stake, you want to go through the process."

Or else he can go the way of former sucker Daniel Negreanu, who says he has come full circle. "I don't care about gambling at golf now," says Negreanu, who still maintains a golf obsession and continues to work with his full-time caddie. "Every day I hit with a simulator inside my house and practice on the green in my back yard. I don't care about how little we play for, or if we play for money at all. I already have money, so it would be stupid to bet enough that I could get hurt if I lose. You can say that I'm like a regular guy now."

Negreanu hesitates for a beat and seems unsure about that statement. Then he adds, "But, to tell you the truth, I'm always open to gambling—especially if it's a fair situation."

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Closeout



No Days Off From Exercise

How to shoot your age 1,000-plus times (at 72 and 96)

BY JOHN FEINSTEIN

It's Sunday, so Sid Beckwith is resting. On the other six days of the week, he drives his golf cart down the hill from the condo he shares with Helen Baillies that backs to the 15th hole at Green Valley Country Club and is at the golf shop in about three minutes.

"We tee off at 7:45 every day except Wednesday," he says, relaxing over lunch. "Wednesday, guys from outside the club come and play with us, and we don't start until 8:45."

None of this is remarkable for someone who belongs to a semi-private club in central Florida except for a couple of things: Beckwith will turn 97 in July. More often than not, he shoots his age or better playing from the white tees—from which the course measures 6,088 yards.

Then there's this: Last

Oct. 24, Sid shot 94. It was the 1,000th time he had officially shot his age or better.

Early in February, he aced the par-3 13th at Green Valley. It was his 17th hole-in-one, the fourth one he's had on that hole. He shot 86 that day. "Yeah, but I had the hole-in-one," he says. "I go out every day and try to get better. That's what makes the game fun."

He had shot 96 the day before, marking the 1,045th time (and counting) he had matched or beaten his age. "I'm not playing very well," he says. "It might be time to change my swing again."

According to Bob DeStefano, hired by Beckwith in 1962 as the pro at Gardiner's Bay Country Club on Shelter Island—a tiny enclave on eastern Long Island—the only thing Sid has done more often than shoot his age is change his golf swing. "Since the day I met him, Sid's been searching for the perfect swing," DeStefano says. "Some day he might find it."

Beckwith learned the game as a teenager growing up on Shelter Island. The pro at the local public golf course gave him a wood mashie. By the time Sid was in high school, he was on the golf team.

"My senior year, I was the only guy on the team," he says. "Most of the time, I played with the principal."

Beckwith was drafted when World War II started and was going to be shipped to Guadal-

canal. But he contracted spinal meningitis during a stopover in San Francisco and was so sick he was given last rites. He recovered, but rather than going into combat, he was sent to Hawaii as a staff sergeant in Ordnance.

"I read all the casualty reports from Guadalcanal," he says. "Chances are pretty good getting spinal meningitis saved my life."

After the war ended, he joined Gardiner's Bay and can't remember if he paid \$60 or \$80 to become a member. His lowest handicap was 5, and he was a perennial semifinalist in the club championship but never won, though he was the medalist once. After he retired in 1978 and began spending winters in Florida, he *did* become club champion at Green Valley—twice.

In fact, it was during a club-championship round in 1990, soon after he had turned 72, that he shot his age for the first time. "Had a birdie putt for 70," he says. "Missed it and shot 71."

Every afternoon, after he plays, Sid gets on an elliptical for about 20 minutes. No days off from exercise.

Fourteen years ago, he lost his wife, Geraldine, to Alzheimer's. Baillies, a neighbor, came over frequently to help. After Geraldine passed away, Sid and Helen began playing golf together.

Sid smiles: "Younger woman. I was born July 19, 1918; she was born Sept. 6, 1918." Helen has also shot her age or better a number of times but doesn't keep an official tally.

When he isn't playing golf, Sid often watches Golf Channel or reads the instructional section of any magazine he can find. "Sometimes I'll try a swing for two or three holes, give it up for another swing and then go to a third one, all in one round," he says. "One of these days, I'm sure I'll find the right one."

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